



PARLIAMENT OF SIERRA LEONE
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Presidential Address Delivered by
His Excellency Alhaji. Dr. Ahmad Tejan Kabbah

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 Fifth Session of the Second Parliament of the Second Republic of Sierra Leone In the Chamber of Parliament Building Tower Hill, Freetown On Friday 23rd June 2006.

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

My duty today is to formally open the Fifth Session of the Second Parliament of Sierra Leone. However, since time is fast approaching to perform another very important constitutional duty, that of dissolving this Parliament in conformity with the requirements of the Constitution of Sierra Leone, so as to pave the way for the next General Elections, I have thought it fit to proceed as follows.

My Address today will concentrate on my relationship with Parliament and on some of the major achievements of my administration over the past 10 years as President of this Republic. Next year, on the occasion of the dissolution of Parliament, I shall report to our people through you the progress we have made as well as the challenges we faced during my Presidency.

I had sworn to protect and defend this Constitution, which provides for Presidential two five year term limits. I will have reached my term limit in May, 2007, and will pass on the baton of leadership to another pair of elected and deserving hands. Many of you will seek re-election to Parliament. I am here to wish you well. I am sure your thoughts are already in your constituencies, but I nevertheless ask you to kindly listen attentively to what I have to say.



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Like me, some of you will not be seeking another mandate. I therefore congratulate you for your service to our people, and on their behalf I thank you for what you have done. I would also like to thank you for showing a good example by voluntarily relinquishing power to give others the opportunity to serve and to bring into this august assembly new thoughts, new perspectives and new ideas. In this way you are making an important contribution to the growth of the democratic tradition, to accountability and to development of our country.

MR. SPEAKER,

I have much to be grateful for. First, I am grateful to Almighty God who in His eternal grace and mercy has kept me going, giving me the life and ability and the physical well being, to serve my fellow Sierra Leoneans under circumstances, which have sometimes been very trying. We should also be grateful to God for the lives of service of our colleagues in this House who have passed on. Let us together continue to pray that Almighty Allah may rest their souls in eternal peace. Secondly, I am grateful to you, Honourable Speaker. Your competence, ability, knowledge, experience, diligence and skillfulness in running the affairs of this Parliament are well known, within and outside the walls of this House. You have brought honour and dignity to Parliament and to our country both in the Commonwealth and elsewhere. You have ably led this Multi-party House, impartially and equitably, earning the respect of both sides of the House. You have often counselled the Honourable Members of this House, especially the new ones, and ensured they appreciated their responsibilities, and the rules and procedures of the Multi-party House. I thank you for the role you have played in promoting and entrenching political reforms in this Parliament.

MR. SPEAKER,

I would now like to thank all Members of Parliament, from all political parties, for their cooperation which made possible the far-reaching political and economic reforms we undertook over the last 10 (ten) years. If they had not passed the required policies, legislations and budgets, many of the successes of my administration would not have been achieved. These successes are a product of a working partnership between the Executive and the Legislature. You, Honourable Members of Parliament, have every reason to associate yourselves with the successes of my administration. The Acts of Parliament passed by you have enabled the Executive to make substantial progress in the areas of, for example, Peace, Security, Development, Financial Management, Human Rights and Good Governance. Since 1996, 95 (ninety-five) bills have been passed in this House, helping to strengthen good governance, to facilitate economic, political and social reforms; as well as to strengthen government capacity to deliver and enhance national unity. We have made substantial progress even as I concede that much more remains to be done.

MR. SPEAKER,

Under your able leadership, the debates in this House have generally been peaceful and civilized. There have not been fist fights or acrimony as witnessed in the Parliaments of some countries. The majority of MPs have proved, by their conduct, that this is indeed a place for civilized and fair debate in pursuit of our national interests. Let me repeat what I have always said, that is, Political opposition is not enmity. The view that ultimately prevails in political debate can come



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from any political party. It will be arrogantly presumptuous and dangerous for the SLPP or any other political party to lay claim to monopoly of progressive thought.

God did not create us that way. And so when we all think alike it only means some of us are not thinking hard enough. And as Albert Einstein said, "He who joyfully marches in rank and file has already earned my contempt. He has been given a large brain by mistake, since for him the spinal cord would suffice."

But, having said that, I would urge opposition political parties to be more proactive and innovative, rather than dwelling inordinately and reactively on nitpicking on what the SLPP Government says or does.

MR. SPEAKER,

One of the most important decisions we made so far is to increase the representation of women in decision-making positions in Government. I strongly urge women to come out and contest for seats or other positions at the forthcoming General elections.

It is now the goal of the African Union to achieve 50 per cent women representation in the management of public affairs. Ladies, you have the constitutional and legal right and now you also have the political support. I entreat you to take advantage of it.

MR. SPEAKER,

In the past when I addressed Parliament, I always analysed the state of the nation and enumerated the goals of my Administration in various sectors. In this my penultimate state address, I will only briefly report on some of our achievements.

MR. SPEAKER,

Let me provide a few highlights of the progress that we have made in the reconstruction, rehabilitation and indeed the general development of our country particularly since the end of the war, a brutal and most destructive war at that. It is important to provide these highlights for the whole nation to appreciate that to the best of its ability my Government has, under difficult circumstances made maximum use of the opportunities available to us including the confidence and trust of well meaning Sierra Leoneans and the firm support of the international community. Perhaps these highlights might even cheer some of our harshest critics who may have failed to appreciate our commitment and methods of operation including our emphasis on consensus and peace building.

Our critics have consistently criticised us that we have not done much in the rehabilitation and the reconstruction of the damage caused not only by the war but much earlier. These critics have not taken account of the fact that the war was declared ended only in 2002. They adopt this attitude either deliberately, or because of lack of knowledge of what happened in other post-war



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situations. Let me remind them of Europe where we have some of the richest and most advanced countries in the World like the United Kingdom, Germany and France.

At the end of the Second World War in 1945, Europe remained devastated; all the countries of Europe had nothing to sell to earn hard currency. Conditions became unbearably difficult and something had to be done. On the 5th of June, 1947 America's then Secretary of State George C. Marshall outlined what would become known as the Marshall Plan. The United States offered up to \$20 billion for relief. By 1953, \$13 billion had been pumped into the war affected countries in Western Europe to get them standing on their feet again. Incidentally, when I went to England for the first time as a student in 1953, that is 8 years after the end of that war the devastation to London and other cities was still very evident. I saw a depressing situation which must have prompted the Americans to develop the Marshall Plan for the reconstruction of Europe.

Therefore, in judging the successes of my administration, the basis of comparison should be, not what obtains in another distant country which did not experience the predicament and neglect which was the lot of Sierra Leone by 1996, but by the entire situation that prevailed in this country in that year and what prevails today, looked at objectively and fairly. We have expended so much resources and exerted so much energy on remedial measures, to put right what had been destroyed or neglected in order to restore the country to its former and proper status. We only need to imagine for a moment the level of development Sierra Leone would have been in today if such huge resources have been committed to building on what existed rather than remedying or rehabilitating what was destroyed or absent due to neglect.

MR. SPEAKER,

There is one other matter which I need to refer to. In all our activities we have been conscious of the fact that one of the social ills that beset this country before our time was the tendency towards parochialism or sectarian approach to Government. We have endeavoured both in the allocation of resources and in the performance of public services and in other respects, to ensure that the country was treated as one entity and that no parochial or sectarian considerations entered into the matter. We have acted as a Government for Sierra Leone, for the whole of Sierra Leone and for all Sierra Leoneans without exception. In employment in the public service, our criterion has been competence and ability to perform and in the case of executive positions, we have taken into account the relevant work experience of the individual concerned. Resources have been allocated and services have been performed on the basis of the needs of the community or location concerned and the availability of the resources. We have not neglected the vulnerable members of our society or those who need special help, care or attention. We have in place policies to attend to all these and to carry them along. In other words, our policy as a Government has been to cater for all and to be fair and even-handed to all while at the same time, we pursue the over-arching interest of the nation.

In this way, we have further promoted and enhanced national cohesion and national unity. It is also in this way that we have been able to eradicate the tendencies towards discrimination and the promotion of tribal or regional interests in our performance of public functions. Treating



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Sierra Leone as one country and Sierra Leoneans as one people and one family is a legacy which I am proud to bequeath to my successor and which I will urge all Sierra Leoneans to espouse and hold on to. After all, this is the fundamental principle "One Country, One People" enshrined in the political party which I personified.

MR. SPEAKER,

In spite of the terrible financial situation we inherited and by the mere din of our prudent management of our resources we have been able to keep the public service afloat paying salaries of public officers, the forces, teachers and nurses on a regular basis and even embarked on a public sector reform with a view to making the public service more effective, relevant and more responsive to the needs of modern Sierra Leone. We have been able to avoid queuing for basic commodities such as fuel and rice and ensured the availability of cash in our banks through serious economic and fiscal management. Those who can remember, there were days when you had to pay a fee only to be able to withdraw funds from your own hard-earned deposits from commercial banks.

MR. SPEAKER,

Our own war ended only four years ago. Let us be realistic. Although I have never been a member of the APC party, yet and while I was in New York, Sierra Leone government officials asked me to join the lobby for Sierra Leone to be classified as a least developed country (LDC). Knowing the advantages that would accrue to our country I decided to help; I did help. Sierra Leone was eventually classified as an LDC.

Sierra Leone, it would be recalled, was first classified as a Least Developed Country (LDC) in the 1980's. At the time the *raison d'être* was that the country would benefit by not contributing to the cost of running a UN Local Country Office, in getting benefits from a special LDC fund, IDA grants from the World Bank, preferential treatment in getting other donor aid, and that such assistance could help the country develop its social services, infrastructure and the economy as a whole. But what eventually happened was the direct reverse, because instead of moving upward the country was plunged into a cycle of underdevelopment, poverty and deprivation, until it was rated in 1991, for the first time, as the least developed country among the nations of the world, according to the 1991 UNDP Human Development Report, an event which occurred much earlier than 1996, when I took up office as President.

What my Government has been preoccupied with since assuming power in 1996 is to address that cycle of underdevelopment, poverty and deprivation that was visited on our country. We are all agreed that the most devastating and destructive of all was the war, which today I am proud to say has ended. We are now in the process of building upon the peace, security and stable environment that now prevails and it is the sacred duty of all the members of this august House, as well as the other arms of government and every citizen of Sierra Leone to work towards rebuilding this country and contribute to its prosperity and continued stability.



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MR. SPEAKER,

The Multi-party political system is now better understood, and is gaining strength. Our people are now getting used to political competition. The Government has put in place a conducive environment for political parties to operate. The number of registered political parties now stands at 27 fully registered and 1 (one) still in the process. I wish such an increase could signify a strengthening of democratic discourse. I am not sure if this is really happening. But, obviously, this increase in numbers represents expanded political freedom, a positive thing in its own right.

A number of elections have taken place since 1996, all of which were peaceful, free and fair, as attested by comments of representatives of the reputable Carter Center who after observing the 2002 general and presidential elections commended voters of Sierra Leone, political parties, and polling workers "for their impressive commitment to peaceful voting under very challenging conditions". Day after day, election after election, we have continued to use our experience and that of others to improve our system. We are moving forward, we are not moving backwards. We have always been ready, willing and able to correct our mistakes. We do not despair when we encounter an obstacle; we work together to find a solution. The steps we have taken in this regard include the following:

- (1) Efforts are ongoing for all registered political parties to evolve and agree on an electoral code of conduct.
- (2) We are in the process of preparing for a National Permanent Voters Register.
- (3) We have increased transparency in the entire electoral process, including the counting of votes. We now use transparent ballot boxes and votes are counted at each polling station in the presence of representatives of political parties.
- (4) The mass media have an important role to play in promoting freedom of opinion, including political opinion. Since 1996, the number of daily newspapers has increased from 14 to 49. All of these except one are privately owned. And the public media gives equal access to all political parties. In fact out of 39 radio stations, 7 are publicly owned while 32 are privately owned. And out of three operating TV stations, two are publicly owned and one is owned by private operators. All I ask as we approach General Elections is that media people should abide by professional ethics, and treat all people and parties fairly.

MR. SPEAKER,

My Government has expanded People's freedom. And that is as it should be. It is not enough to be a free country; the citizens must also enjoy freedom within the limits of the Constitution and our laws. Some human rights activists look upon the United States of America as a beacon of freedom and human rights. The Fourth President of the United States, James Madison, who played an important role in the drafting of the United States Constitution, had this to say of freedom: "Liberty may be endangered by the abuses of liberty as well as by the abuses of



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power." So let us not ignore the potential dangers posed by those who are inclined to abuse their liberty.

MR. SPEAKER,

I am pleased that our defence policy-a relatively small professional Army, with high level of discipline, properly trained and equipped and able to defend our borders at all times has stood the test of time. We took steps to ensure the following:

- (a) The RSLAF has been strengthened to ensure the security of our borders;
- (b) Military exercises have been held to ensure the military follow the rules scrupulously and are better prepared for any emergency;
- (c) Basic services for our troops have been strengthened;
- (d) Housing for the troops is being improved;
- (e) Land set aside for the Army to meet their needs in training and logistics has been identified, and is being surveyed and demarcated;
- (f) The capacity of the Army to assist in civilian rescue missions and national emergencies has been, and is still being expanded;
- (g) The development of the capacity for military research and technology development is being contemplated;
- (h) Military cooperation with other countries, especially at the regional level, is being strengthened;
- (i) Steps have been taken for our troops to take part in peace keeping missions; and
- (j) Financial management and controls have been strengthened within the military. The military's accounts are now audited and not as in the past when they were regarded as top secret and not subject to scrutiny.

MR. SPEAKER,

We now have zero tolerance against illegal possession of arms and ammunition. With the gains we have made so far in achieving an arms free society we shall take prompt and effective legal action against any individual found to be in possession of arms and ammunition without lawful authority or authorization in the same way as we will do in any case that tend to disturb the peace and stability of this nation. It is in this connection that the Government is mobilizing the necessary resources to curb the current spate of lawlessness in the country. We are warning those



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who engage in lawless activities that the era of impunity is over and that we are determined to firmly restore law and order back in our society and maintain a peaceful, orderly and progressive nation.

We have tried in the last 10 (ten) years to improve the operational environment for our troops. We need to do more, but our Commanders and Soldiers have no doubt about our political will, the determination and the plans and preparations that are afoot to meet this goal.

I thank them for their patience and understanding, and I thank them for their immense contribution to the security of the State.

MR. SPEAKER,

The Sierra Leone Police has likewise been strengthened through new and modern equipment, including communication equipment, forensic laboratories and vehicles.

The Police Training School has been rehabilitated and many Police Officers have been trained and re-trained to enhance their capacity in various disciplines; new Police Stations, posts and barracks are being built in various parts of the country, and others are being rehabilitated.

MR. SPEAKER,

We have made some progress in our efforts to improve upon the problem of congestion in our prisons. We believe that the Pademba Road prisons should be relocated somewhere else possibly Masanke which was originally a maximum security prison so as to avoid interruption in the flow of traffic in the city and thereby address other related security problems.

The prison service as well as the fire force have been provided with new vehicles, and a new training school has been built at Waterloo for the prisons. There has been recruitment of new prisons officers. Training of these new personnel as well as retraining of existing personnel has been carried out successfully. Rehabilitation work has been carried out on prison premises and staff quarters in areas where they were destroyed during the war.

Similar efforts have also been made to strengthen the Fire Force, including the creation of Fire stations in the provincial headquarter towns of Makeni, Bo and Kenema for the first time.

MR. SPEAKER,

I would like to take this opportunity to thank and congratulate all the Heads of the Security Forces, that is, the Military, the Police, Intelligence and Security Services, the Prisons Services and the Fire Force, as well as their Commanders, Officers, Men and Women, for their high level of discipline, commitment and bravery. The degree of cooperation and coordination among the security forces is exemplary and it clearly is the surest way of ensuring the lasting security of our country. I congratulate them for that.



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MR. SPEAKER,

Over the last 10 (ten) years we maintained our policy of good neighbourliness. As a result, our border security has been progressively strengthened all these years and it continues to be so, despite what a few people may be saying about the situation in Yenga, a matter that both Guinea and ourselves have resolved to settle amicably. In addition we have played an important role in addressing conflicts in the region, without ourselves generating refugees. We successfully hosted the first UN sponsored international conference on Peace and DDR last year, a clear indication of international confidence in our governance system. Sierra Leone is now considered as one of the best examples for peace making and consolidation around the world. In a special study conducted by the United States and ECOWAS, Sierra Leone emerged as the most suitable candidate for coastal logistical depot for ECOWAS and hopefully for an African Standby Force. Mali was selected for a land military logistical depot. Professor Bob Kandeh formerly of Statistics Sierra Leone and Dr Francis KaiKai formerly of DDR and later DACO have both been recruited to help in the Sudanese peace process. Our Police force is now taking part in the training and rebuilding of the Liberian Police Force. They have also been deployed in a UN peace-keeping operation in Haiti.

We have revived and strengthened our relations with bilateral and multilateral development partners, enabling us to receive more aid and concessional loans, as well as receive substantial debt relief. Moreover, Sierra Leone has developed a record of development partner relations that reflects a case of best practice in aid delivery and effectiveness, national ownership, donor relations and aid harmonisation and coordination. This was quite evident in the last CG meeting in London where donors expressed their satisfaction at the progress Sierra Leone has made in these areas.

We do not want our country to be totally dependent on others. The increased flow of aid and loans has not increased our dependency on others. In fact we have slightly reduced the dependence of our budget on external aid.

The enhanced cooperation with our development partners has not dampened our resolve to work for a fairer globalisation and better treatment in global economic and trading relations. We are determined to maintain this position.

One of the recommendations of the Commission for Africa chaired by Prime Minister Tony Blair of the United Kingdom is the robust support for the proposed Investment Climate Facility to unleash Africa's strong entrepreneurial spirit. This is also our own policy.

MR. SPEAKER,

Government has shown by deeds, its political will to promote good governance. Laws have been enacted, regulations have been promulgated, and transparency has been enhanced in relation to Government functions for this purpose. As I have said, we have established the Commission for Human Rights. We established the Anti-Corruption Commission, and we are working on improving Government communication.



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From the beginning of my Presidency I said that my policy would be one of openness and truth. I told my friends that I would rather be despised for being truthful and honest than to be loved for lying to my people. The people understood me, they trusted me and have always cooperated with me. This proves that we do not have to administer sugar-coated policies to them and we did not. I thank them.

A confident government, an accountable government, is open to the people. It has no reason to hide. A leader who is convinced about the correctness of a decision has no reason not to be open about it.

MR. SPEAKER,

We are currently working to establish a Directorate of Communication. Almost every ministry now has a senior official acting as a Communication Officer with the duty to inform the public, including through the media, what the ministry is doing. The Ministry of Information's weekly press conferences are based on this policy. It is general knowledge that the Minister of Information holds bi-weekly press conferences where the press and the public are informed about all our activities except those dealing with sensitive security matters. He also appears on weekly radio programmes with senior journalists. It is the duty of government to communicate. Such a duty, in a democratic society, derives from the people's right to be informed, and to be heard, on issues of concern to them. We consider such a duty on the part of government not voluntary, it is mandatory.

One advantage of an open government is that it enhances accountability and discipline in government operations. We have begun to discharge this duty, but much remains to be done. There are still people who think that everything in government is top secret; even their faults. That is very wrong; but it will take time to change the attitude of each and every leader. But we must move forward, never backwards. The Government of Sierra Leone must be a people's Government, deriving legitimacy from the people, serving them in an accountable manner and not afraid to be open to them.

More broadly, we need to focus our policies on priority issues and on solutions to the people's concerns and problems. We still entertain inordinately the politics of lamentation. We are obsessed with finding someone to blame for everything, and are not doing enough to research, argue and produce alternative strategies. I have always said that criticisms should be constructive and would be even more productive with the suggestion of alternatives. Sadly, most of our criticisms are self-serving. Our politics are vociferous rather than being problem-solving and result-oriented. Most regrettably, a group of Sierra Leoneans organised themselves in London during the recent Consultative Conference Meeting convened with the support of the international community to mobilize resources for Sierra Leone's development, and purely for partisan political interests, these Sierra Leoneans mounted protests and attempted to disrupt the meetings, having no regard to the harm this might do to the suffering people of Sierra Leone.



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MR. SPEAKER,

In 1996 and again 2002 I swore to defend and protect the Constitution of Sierra Leone which provides for the separation of powers between the Executive, the Legislature and the Judiciary. In these past 10 years, not only have I respected this separation of powers, but I have also tried to enrich and strengthen it. And I am grateful to you, Mr. Speaker and to my Lord Chief Justice for your cooperation in this regard.

MR. SPEAKER,

Since 1996 when I assumed office as President, the fight against corruption was one of the key priorities of my Government. After extensive studies and planning in collaboration with the donor community, particularly DFID, we were able to establish the Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) in 2000. The structure and mandate of the ACC were carefully designed to effectively address the problem of corruption, which was widely tolerated and even exalted in our society in a comprehensive and dedicated manner, placing equal emphasis on education, prevention, detection and punishment.

After overcoming the inevitable teething problems the ACC has made a remarkable progress towards the fulfilment of its mandate. Evidence of this progress can now be seen and felt everywhere. Gone are the days when no one dare talk about corruption without risking the most severe retribution. Rather than being tolerated or exalted, reports of corrupt practices anywhere, particularly in Government are now regarded with the greatest contempt and where proven those involved attract lawful punishment and scorn in the society.

The education and sensitisation campaign being carried out by the ACC has made the public to be aware of the social and economic ills which corruption inflicts on the entire nation. There is now hardly any person in Sierra Leone who is not aware that corruption is a serious crime carrying very severe punishment, that no one is exempt as certain high profile convictions have shown.

MR. SPEAKER,

We know that the struggle against corruption is an unending endeavour that calls for continuous vigilance, long-term commitment and a determination to confront new challenges. This is why we have recently made changes in the staffing of the ACC to improve on its managerial competence.

We are now placing greater emphasis on building the appropriate capacity in the public service to complement our efforts in detecting and punishing corruption. This entails the creation of a highly competent and motivated public service, including the judiciary that observes clearly defined policies, management rules and procedures, particularly those relating to the management of public funds.

Assessment of the state of the Sierra Leone economy is divided into two phases: Phase one 1996-1997 and Phase two 1998-2005/6.



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The first half of the 1990s was characterized by serious economic, social and political difficulties. Economic growth was negative, the social sector deteriorated, characterized by high illiteracy rate (78%), limited education facilities, schools, colleges, and limited access; poor health facilities, hospitals, clinics and limited access; weak institutions, low capacity and failed programmes. On top of all of this, a civil conflict engulfed the country in March, 1991, the dismal consequences of which are well documented and well known.

The restoration of constitutional governance in 1996 provided joy and hope to the population for economic, social and political transformation. The legacy of the war and decades of mismanagement had however left the economy in grave difficulties. Key standard indicators attest to this. On the economic front, GDP Growth was negative, central government's overall fiscal deficit on a commitment basis was -6.8%, and public sector savings was -1.6%. In the monetary sector, foreign net assets were -Le159.03 million while net domestic assets amounted to only Le245 million.

The situation was further exacerbated by the recurrence of outbreaks of violence and political instability. In spite of the fragile security situation, the return to constitutionality in 1996 witnessed remarkable developments in the socio-economic and political arena, resulting in the structural transformation of the economy. The macro economic gains, which followed the restoration of democracy were disrupted by a military interregnum from May, 1997 to March, 1998.

The consequences of the military interruption of constitutional governance were grave. Real GDP growth plummeted to -17.6%, Gross Domestic Investment as a percent of GDP fell to -2.4%, Gross National Savings as a percentage of GDP fell to -3.4%. The public finances of the country also worsened, with government's overall fiscal deficit falling further from -6.8% in 1996 to -7.5% in 1997. The second half of the year 1997 experienced a significant deterioration in government finances against the backdrop of a loss in official imports, declining industrial production and mounting pressure on recurrent expenditures. In the absence of foreign inflows and the lack of a domestic market for Government securities, the Military junta resorted to Central Bank advances to finance its huge expenditures. As a consequence, the overall budget deficit, on a commitment basis, rose to 7.5% of GDP in 1997. The money supply expanded considerably and the inflation rate skyrocketed to 66.9% by the close of the year. The official exchange rate also witnessed a massive depreciation of over 50%.

Social services, education, health and infrastructure became dysfunctional and the country was engulfed with total political chaos and anarchy.

The recovery of the economy following the restoration of constitutional government in March 1998 was adversely affected by the escalation of the rebel war and the subsequent invasion of the capital city in January 1999. The government did not however relent and was able to record significant progress towards a return to normalcy and economic rejuvenation. Also wide ranging policies, covering, legal and institutional reforms were embarked upon.



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In order to provide the enabling environment to facilitate economic, social and political transformation, the highest priority was accorded to the creation of a security environment that enabled the free and unhindered movement of people, goods and services across the country.

The first step in this regard was the formulation and implementation of the Disarmament Demobilization and Reintegration (DDR) Programme, for absorption of ex-combatants across all layers of the conflict into civilian society. At the same time, a programme was initiated for restructuring, retraining and re-equipping the army and the police, within the framework of a comprehensive national security policy.

The second priority focused on relaunching the economy. The focus was on macroeconomic renovation aimed at sustaining the gains already achieved in reducing structural and systemic imbalances in the economy. The targets, inter alia, were to enhance efficient budgetary management, reduce the debt burden and augment public expenditure in the social sectors, education, health and infrastructure. The immediate task was to provide humanitarian relief assistance to internally displaced persons and returnees, and in the short term, provide them basic farm tools and get them back to food production and related economic activities.

A third priority was improving access to basic education and health care and enhancing income and employment opportunities.

These prioritised targets were defined in the Interim Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (IPRSP), one of the first post-conflict systematic blue prints developed, following the cessation of hostilities.

The evaluation by all stakeholders, the government, Sierra Leoneans and international partners revealed that the objectives and targets of the immediate post-conflict era were satisfactorily delivered. The evidence is there for everyone to see. For example the DDR programme was, exceptionally delivered to the extent that it has become a model in the African region and elsewhere.

A National Recovery Strategy (2002-2003) was subsequently developed focusing on - Restoration of State Authority across the country; rebuilding communities; Peace building and human rights; and Restoration of the economy.

The key achievements of this strategy were:

- * Restoration of state authority across the country.
- * Re-establishment of local governance institutions - City, Town, Urban/Rural and District Councils.



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- * Restoration of Local Administration structures, Paramount Chieftaincy elections have taken place in almost every chiefdom in the country and the respect and honour of this sacred institution restored.
- * Resettlement of IDPS and repatriation of refugees: The resettlement of an estimated two million IDP's was facilitated and the repatriation of about two hundred thousand of refugees was supported.
- * Ex-combatants Reintegration: A total of 72,490 ex-combatants reintegrated.
- * Health care Delivery: Significant strides made, including establishment of peripheral Health Units (PHUs) and training of personnel.
- * Education: The introduction of free primary school education in 2000, have gained momentum. A new initiative (SABABU) for education of the girl child in the North and Eastern regions as well as the payment of public exam fees for all eligible candidates.
- * Peace Building and Human Rights: Thousands of people died during the conflict as a result of illegal killings and torture, and many suffered from human rights violations. Significant strides have been made in these areas.
- * Economic Reconstruction: In pursuit of the key objectives of removing distortions in the economy, for achieving rapid sustainable growth and equitable social and economic development, wide ranging structural and institutional reforms have been put in place since 2004. With the support of development partners the key initiatives in this area are the Poverty Reduction and Growth Facility (PRGF) arrangement with the IMF, the World Bank's Third Economic Recovery and Rehabilitation Credit (ERRLIII), the ten-year Poverty Reduction Framework Arrangement (PRFA), with the UK, the European Union's post-conflict Budgetary Support and the PRSP, a multi-donor arrangement. In addition to the underlying quantitative targets, performance under these programmes, is largely assessed by progress made in the following broad areas of reforms: Peace and Security, good governance, public service reform, strengthening fiscal and public financial management systems and promoting private sector development.
- * The Banking and Financial Sector has also played an important role in economic recovery, growth and development of a post-conflict economy, such as ours. It has done so through effective management of monetary policy contributing to high sustainable growth currently estimated at 7.3%, low inflation 13.5%, and exchange rate stability.

With inflation skyrocketing and the commercial banks characterized by huge portfolios of non-performing bank loans, and high level of liquid assets in the immediate post-war period, monetary policy was aimed at reducing the rate of inflation, and financial sector reforms have



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focused on reducing fragility in the banking system and improving the policy implementation capacity of the central bank.

As economic activities expand and investment opportunities are created, the number of commercial banks has today increased to seven. Provincial Bank branches have also increased from two in mid 1996 to fifteen at the end of 2005 and presently twenty seven.

Furthermore, to address the many emerging challenges facing the banking system, extensive legislative reforms have been instituted. This has entailed the enactment of the Bank of Sierra Leone Act 2000, the Banking Act 2000 and the Other Financial Services Act 2001. These legislations gave more independence and power to the Bank of Sierra Leone to regulate and supervise banks as well as other financial institutions.

* The use of banks and other financial institutions to launder the proceeds of crime and terrorist activities has become a serious threat to global peace and security, and a concern to my government. To fight against this menace, my administration facilitated the enactment of the Anti-Money Laundering Act 2005. A major objective of this Act is to prevent money launderers from using the financial system for their activities.

* As a vibrant financial sector is crucial for the growth of the economy, my government in collaboration with stakeholders has facilitated the establishment of a Stock Exchange to promote medium and long-term investment.

* I want to express profound thanks to the First Initiative and the Commonwealth Secretariat, for providing technical assistance in this area. Training courses for Brokers and Dealers, have been completed and Interim Regulations developed awaiting enactment by Parliament.

* Trading in the stock exchange will begin as soon as this process is complete. I therefore encourage companies and all Sierra Leoneans to participate in the stock market once trading starts.

To address the problem of the scarcity of foreign exchange which characterized the economy following the conclusion of the civil conflict, the Bank of Sierra Leone introduced a foreign exchange auction scheme in the year 2000. The auction has succeeded in supplementing the supply of foreign exchange in the market, improved market-based allocation of foreign exchange and stabilized the exchange rate in a competitive, transparent and consistent manner. In fact, the Leone is presently one of the most stable currencies in the sub-region. The auction provides an avenue for businesses with the proper documentation to secure foreign exchange to undertake foreign transactions.

Marked improvement has also been recorded in the country's Gross Foreign Exchange reserves over the past decade, reflecting continued donor confidence in the national economic policy



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agenda and progress accomplished in revitalizing economic activities. Foreign reserves, which stood at US\$26.5mn in 1996, increased to about seven fold to US\$170.48mn in 2006

The defunct rural banks, which were severely vandalized and incapacitated during the civil war, have now been replaced by community banks. The concept of community banking is based on establishing simple financial intermediaries in the rural areas, which will mobilise idle resources and deploy such mobilised resources for the extension of supervised credit to small-scale entrepreneurs and other related activities in the rural areas.

The Community bank scheme commenced in 2003 with the establishment of two Pilot Community banks at Mile 91 (Yoni Community Bank) and Lunsar (Marampa-Masimera Community Bank), both in the Northern Province of the country. Two additional banks were established shortly after - the Mattru Community Bank in the South and the Segbwema Community Bank in the East. Two more community banks (Kabala - in the far North and Zimmi - in the far South) will be officially reopened before the end of 2006. In the medium-term, the central bank in collaboration with donors, plans to increase the number of community banks to 10 (ten) to help harness financial resources in economically viable communities throughout the country.

The country's productive sector was most severely affected by the decade-long civil war and today forms the bedrock for efforts aimed at economic revitalization. The immediate post-war period witnessed substantial growth in output, with real GDP growth at 27.5% in 2002 compared to -17.6% at the height of the conflict in 1997.

In spite of adverse external shocks, particularly in the oil sector, the economy continues to experience sustained expansion over the last three years, reflecting increased activities in agriculture, mining, manufacturing, construction and service sectors. Real GDP growth was 6.5% in 2003, 7.4% in 2004, and 7.3% in 2005. Output is projected to grow by 7.4% in 2006 and within the medium-term framework it is expected to stabilize in the range of 6-7 percent by 2008.

To help mobilize much needed revenue and streamline fiscal management in the post-war period, government has instituted a series of measures:

- To strengthen tax administration, a new Income Tax Act came into effect in April 2000.
- Government budget is now prepared within a Medium Term Expenditure Framework (MTEF) predicated on poverty reduction, with the Ministry of Finance issuing MTEF Guidelines to all Ministries, Departments, and Agencies (MDAs) detailing the processes involved in identifying sector strategies and prioritising programmes geared towards achieving the objective of poverty reduction.



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- In order to establish a legal and regulatory framework with clear definitions of financial management and accountability and to enhance decentralized budget execution, an Integrated Financial Management Information System (IFMIS) has been established with support from the World Bank under the Institutional Reform and Capacity Building (IRCB) project.

- To enhance transparency and accountability in the management and use of public resources, Public Expenditure Tracking Surveys (PETS) have been initiated by Government. Several rounds of these surveys have been concluded and the implementation of the recommendations contained in the PETS Action Plan has enhanced transparency and accountability in the management of public resources. This initiative and the prosecution of high-profiled individuals has dramatically reduced the rate of corruption. A similar result has been achieved by the creation of an independent National Procurement Board.

- To strengthen institutional capacity in the various revenue departments and facilitate revenue mobilization, the National Revenue Authority (NRA) was established in 2003. The NRA has succeeded in fully integrating the Customs and Income Tax Departments into its structure. This has led to an improvement in the effectiveness in tax administration and an increase in tax revenue.

MR. SPEAKER,

78. My government achieved another major objective by successfully conducting a thorough Population and Housing Census in 2004, the final results of which I launched in February this year. We accomplished this major task in a record time of 14 months by firstly completely restructuring the entire statistical system in our country, including the re-engineering of its institutional set up as well as developing an appropriate legal framework. As a result, since 1984 when the last Census was held, we now have validated, accurate and comprehensive figures of the population of this country. Moreover, we have generated the necessary data that will enhance development planning, support our decentralization programme; assist in programme formulation, and in the monitoring of progress in the implementation of our Poverty Reduction Strategy. Additionally, and very significantly, as we approach 2007, the use of the final Census results will support Sierra Leone's first post-conflict constituency-based elections, thereby enhancing a free, fair and peaceful electoral process that will further consolidate our democracy and strengthen the stability of our nation.

MR. SPEAKER,

In spite of the significant strides that have been made since my famous the "War Don Don" declaration in January 2002, enormous challenges still confront our nation's post-conflict reconstruction. Key among these challenges are:

* Firstly, consolidation and sustainability of peace. Peace and stability are a pre-condition for growth and development.



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* Secondly, stable and effective security environment. The delivery of service in this area is a function of well trained, resourced, disciplined and motivated national security apparatus. The training and upgrading of the army and police are a first strategic step in this direction. Much more remains to be done to make this sustainable. The population and communities are key stakeholders and must be proactive and contribute to peace and security in their environment.

* Thirdly, stable macroeconomic environment, that contributes to high and sustainable growth, as well as equitable distribution of the benefits of growth. High economic (GDP) growth by itself is a necessary but not sufficient contributor to the well being of the population. Growth must result in job creation, improved education and health delivery services, adequate housing, sustainable energy supply and adequate socio-economic infrastructure. The challenges in this area are enormous, as this is the bedrock of economic renovation and development.

* Fourthly, upholding and promoting participatory democracy and the rule of law. The origin of conflicts across the globe, including the Sierra Leone Civil War could significantly be attributable to the mauling of democratic institutions and processes as well as marginalisation of the people, for a prolonged period. This almost invariably, would lead to economic deprivation and disaffection. Another manifestation of bad governance is over-centralisation of governance institutions and processes, and concentration of power in few hands. Conversely, the benefits of participatory governance are enormous and must be pursued at all cost.

A critical element of this challenge, is upholding the rule of law. The cardinal principles here are, that everyone is equal before the law and no one in exercising his or her rights must trample upon the rights of other citizens. Any violation of these principles would lead to chaos and insecurity for all.

The fifth challenge for post-conflict economic reconstruction in Sierra Leone is to build a solidly educated and healthy population. An uneducated nation, is at best a lost nation, at worst a dead nation. Education plays a pivotal role in a country's development. Health is equally critical, as its combination with education, will provide a productive and vibrant labour force that will constitute the driver of the economy. Support to the institutions that create this labour force, through adequate resources, training as well as technical and infrastructural support, cannot be overemphasized.

Managing Expectations - The simplest view about expectations is that people expect the future to be like the past and adapt their plans accordingly. This is referred to in Economic literature, as the "Adaptive Expectations Hypothesis". The main challenge to this hypothesis, has come from a group of economists who argue that past experience is only one of a number of variables that affect future outcomes. The people must take onboard other dynamics of the economy in planning for the future.

Attitudes of Sierra Leoneans must also shift towards the positive from the overtly negative.



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These and many other challenges would have to be met headlong, if the objectives of a peaceful, stable economic and social environment are to be realized. We owe it to the present and future generations to achieve this objective.

. As already stated, during the tenure of my administration, government has initiated numerous political and socio-economic reforms designed to create and maintain durable peace as we lay the foundation for sustainable sound economic development.

However, before embarking on these reforms we had to examine critically the factors that led to the collapse of our society, the economy and eventually the civil conflict that made us become almost a failed state. We then adopted a legislative programme that enabled us establish appropriate implementing institutional agencies to bring about the desired reforms in order to transform and modernise our society and economy. Some of the reform programmes have now been in place for a while but there is a gestation period that would have to elapse to allow a critical mass to occur when their impact will be felt through the society.

Some of the benefits resulting from the changes we have introduced will fructify many years after I leave office but some earlier than that. What I am asking everyone of us to do is to allow time for these changes to be embedded in our systems and culture for them to reach the point where it is impossible to derail them and bring us back to the disastrous situation we were in not too long ago.

One of the recent successes of my administration has been the introduction of the National Social Security and Insurance Trust (NASSIT). My government recognises that every individual has the human right to social protection and, equally important that social security rights should be protected. Rights to social security are an indispensable element for the development of any society. Aware of this right to social protection, and as a responsible government, we introduced, and Parliament enacted the National Social Security and Insurance Trust Act 2000. The administration of NASSIT is a major milestone in the nation's pension system. Social Security employs a progressive formula that intentionally returns a higher percentage of wages to low and average earners. It guarantees to working and retired Sierra Leoneans who contribute to the scheme income stability that kicks out poverty. With NASSIT, in addition to the death gratuity paid, social security pays the surviving spouse and dependants monthly pension. For the spouse, she/he receives pension until death.

Another important element of NASSIT is the Social Safety Net component which caters for the basic needs of people aged 60 and over who have no sources of income from assets or family support. This scheme will provide food and shelter for these people for life.

The war on poverty is being fought on several fronts and it is a success story on all those fronts. There has been a rapid expansion of quality education to every chiefdom in the Provinces as well as in the Western Area. Almost every Chiefdom now boasts at least one Junior Secondary School. Primary education is free from classes 1-6; every girl child who passes the National



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Primary School Examination in the Northern and Eastern regions gets free education with free books and a supply of uniforms up to JSS III. In addition my government now pays the fees for all public examinations from NPSE TO WASSCE. The removal of the burden of these fees from parents is an important element in the fight against poverty.

In the area of Tertiary education the country now boasts of two Universities with Polytechnics each in the North and in the East. In this sector, government also removes the burden of fees from some parents by the award of grants-in-aid to all deserving students.

There are Health Centres in every chiefdom while District hospitals have either been rehabilitated or rebuilt. In Freetown Connaught Hospital, PCM Hospital and the Children's Hospital have been completely rehabilitated, refurbished and upgraded into referral and teaching institutions that meet the standards of post-graduate medical training. The construction of the 250 bed modern hospital in Makeni is far advanced, with a similar hospital in Serabu in the Bo district also at an advanced stage of construction.

The National Commission for Social Action (NaCSA) is one of the most successful government Agencies in our rehabilitation and development efforts, and has received the commendation of our development partners like the World Bank. NaCSA's success story has made it a household name in every community, town and village in Sierra Leone where evidence of its activities are appreciated by the people. I must thank the Commissioner and his support staff for demonstrating that Sierra Leoneans can and do rise up to expectation.

In 2002 I pledged that at the end of my Presidency, no Sierra Leonean should go to bed hungry. When I launched the Food Security Project four years ago some people scoffed at it, while others are waiting with open palms for 2007 when they would expect food hand-outs from government. I am happy to report to this House that at a recent review of four years of the operation of the Food Security Project it was confirmed by such independent agencies as WFP and FAO that we have attained 69% of our objective. Those who want to do no work and are only waiting to be fed free food may go on waiting.

This has been a long speech, just as leading a country for 10 years is a long journey. Many people have worked and walked with me that long journey. I want to thank them.

I recall with fond memories working with such people as the late Rev. Paul Dunbar, the late S. B. Marah, the late R. E. S. Lagawo, the late Abu Koroma, Alex Koroma, the late Thaimu Bangura and many others. I should like us to continue to pray that Almighty God may keep their souls in eternal peace.

MR. SPEAKER,

I tried to constitute a government of people with integrity and initiative. Almost all of them have lived up to my expectation. The successes of my Administration that I have outlined today were



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made possible by their efforts. Some sections of our society seem to like frequent reshuffle of ministers, as if that is the panacea for efficiency and progress. A serious official needs at least 6 months on a job before one can reasonably expect that that individual is in a position to professionally identify challenges and come out with solutions to address them. This may well explain why apart from resignations, the current United States President, for example, has carried out no major reshuffle since becoming President. Otherwise the post of Minister becomes a training school rather than an institution to solve serious national problems. Furthermore, just about the time I took up office as President some commentator from Edinburgh University stated that, one of the causes of the problems in Sierra Leone is the fact that since 1961 when the country became independent no effort had been made to restructure the Government institutions to reflect changes in the country and the world at large. I agreed entirely with the analysis, hence the very significant and extensive restructuring measures I have introduced with the assistance of development partners, and which are still ongoing. This is a more sustainable approach to solving problems than changing people when there is no evidence that they have done anything wrong. To move staff just for the sake of moving results in loss of valuable time and skills, which we can ill afford.

I would like to thank all public sector officials for the valuable service they have rendered to this country and people during my tenure as President. I wish I could list all the successes they all helped to produce in the last 10 years. But there are many good things I have not mentioned today. However I have continued to receive reports from every ministry, department and sector, and these would be reflected in my final address to Parliament. I want everyone to know that I am truly grateful for what together we have done, sometimes under difficult circumstances. I would wish all the best for those officials who wish to continue to serve in the public sector. Their knowledge and experience and the networks they have developed in government and outside - nationally, regionally and internationally - are a valuable resource that should not be entirely lost.

In a special way, I want to thank our development partners, both bilateral and multilateral, for their understanding, cooperation and commitment to the cause of development in Sierra Leone. When I assumed office in 1996, relations between most of them and Sierra Leone were at a low ebb. But, almost from the beginning, they listened to me, they trusted me, they worked with me and the successes attributed to my government were made possible by that unwavering support. The list is long, and I have already spoken for much too long. So I ask for their understanding when I do not mention them by name. What I ask for is that each one of our bilateral and multilateral partners accepts the words of sincere gratitude, and my request that they continue supporting the next government, especially in helping us gradually build the capacity to reduce our dependence on them.

I also want to thank all religious leaders for their prayers for me, for our government and for our nation and for their support to the government. Much of the success in social service delivery depended on their cooperation. Their agitation for a fairer global system, and for debt relief, was



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very helpful. The task is not yet complete; I ask them to continue working with the next government towards this end.

I am optimistic about the future of Sierra Leone. But we must be disciplined and be ready to be innovative and hard working. Our leaders must be upright and accountable to the people. We should embrace openness and truthfulness, and remain confident of our latent capabilities and committed to the imperative of self-reliance and self-development.

In democratic governance, the right to govern derives from the people. Once elected to power you can either govern or lead. I prefer to lead. When you govern you compel. When you lead you persuade and convince. You do not have to be a democrat to govern. Even colonizers and dictators govern. But to lead is to show the way, it is about being a good example to those you lead, it is the ability to make people feel confident and secure when they follow you. They follow you not because they are terrified of you, but because they love and trust you. And trust is not given for words, but earned by deeds, by the direction you take, and by genuinely caring about people. For as one religious leader once said, "maturity begins to grow when you can sense your concern for others outweighing your concern for yourself".

I believe earnestly that our people should be led, not governed. I believe earnestly that it is the people's inalienable right to be convinced about government's policies and agenda. And I believe that such a right cannot be fully enjoyed if the government is not willing to be open and accountable, to always explain to the people what it is doing with the people's taxes, and in the people's name. Here let's strike a note of caution. In our quest for political power, and having regard to the fact that the vast majority of our people do not have the same opportunity of exposure to the workings of democracy in other countries where it has been well established we owe it as a duty not to mislead or deceive them. Political power obtained through deceit or fraud may well negate the ability of the people to make deliberate decisions as to who should govern them. This in its turn will defeat the whole purpose of democracy. This is what I would like to leave as a legacy and will continue to watch as a highly interested observer.

The next Parliament and the next Government will be under great pressure to meet the people's heightened expectations. I wish them every success. There is a proverb that says, "If you wish to know what a man is, place him in authority." I am about to come to the end of my time in authority. The people now know me. My hope and prayer is that those we will together be putting in power next year will, in the end, be known for their goodness, for their wisdom, for their genuine concern for people, for their commitment to fighting poverty and injustice, and for their innovativeness and integrity.

MR. SPEAKER,

I have tried, with all my energies and intellect, to lead our country diligently and justly, with integrity, with commitment and with courage. I have ensured the country remains peaceful and united, living amicably with our neighbours and earning deserved respect regionally and internationally. I have worked hard and innovatively to develop new ideas and strategies, and to



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create the right domestic and international environment for economic take-off, with economic growth rates that can empower us to overcome degrading poverty. I thank all those who prayed to God that I should have physical strength and intellectual ability to successfully complete the tasks that history placed upon me. The time will soon come for me to wind up. The time is approaching for me to hand over the baton to the next runner.

I started this journey with a very trusted partner who the Almighty called to rest sometime ago. She always stood steadfastly by me in thick and thin and we pray that the good Lord may continue to grant her eternal rest.

I will leave happily, confident that our next President will hit the ground running, taking forward the good things with new energy, new vigour and new speed.

I thank you once again Mr. Speaker and Honourable Members of Parliament for your great cooperation.

I shall be addressing you again no doubt. This time I am only going to say "Au Revoir" since I shall take my final leave of you sometime next year.

I thank you.