

**PRESIDENTIAL ADDRESS AT STATE OPENING OF THE SECOND SESSION OF THE FOURTH
PARLIAMENT OF THE SECOND REPUBLIC OF SIERRA LEONE**

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:

By Divine Providence, this is the eighth time I am standing before this Honourable House as President. And by the grace of God, during this my second term in office, I shall stand here a few more times to give an account of my stewardship of this great nation before the esteemed representatives of the people. The occasions have been momentous and this Honourable House continues to be the bastion of freedom where the central tenets of democracy are upheld. The modern world has made it possible for those who are not here to listen to us on radio or watch us on television as I address the nation. What we are doing to positively transform this nation is visible from wherever our people are. It is on the Internet - Youtube, Facebook, Whatsapp and other social media. The achievements are in every chieftom, in every district headquarter town and in every city of our beloved country.

I like Parliament; my first government job as a politician was in this Honourable House; once a parliamentarian, always a parliamentarian. That is why, even as President, I have ensured that we continue to build the capacity of parliament more than any time in the country's history. That is my pledge to you: to do more for this country than at any time in the nation's history; to build roads; to grow the economy; to increase salaries of teachers, police, soldiers, health workers and lecturers; to reform the public service; to create programmes targeted at the health of mothers, pregnant women and children; and to invest in education.

I subscribe to the notion that one of the purposes of government is to secure the people against the ravages of time. We took over governance at a time of economic recession in many countries; a time of ravaging global financial, food and fuel difficulties. But we secured our people against the worse effects of this. Our fuel subsidies stabilized the domestic price of petrol at a time of rising costs of fuel in the global markets; our increased production of foodstuff, and removal of import duties on rice stabilized the cost of our staple food; our removal of user fees at

hospitals prevented thousands of deaths. At a time of violence all over the world, we conducted peaceful elections; we ensured, as stated by the Global Peace Index, that we are one of the most peaceful nations on earth; and we are contributing peace-keeping forces in other lands.

Under our watch our country has known greater peace and non-violence than witnessed under previous governments; under our watch, this country has not carried out capital punishment; under our watch, there has not been any enactment of laws curtailing freedom. Rather, from the transformation of the SLBC in my first term to the Access to Information Act in my second, we have enacted laws expanding and entrenching liberties.

Mr. Speaker,

We are committed to the dictum that today must be better than yesterday. That is why we have acted to ensure that the minimum wage today is better than yesterday; that is why there are many more investments worth hundreds of millions of dollars today than yesterday; that is why we have continued to generate our own resources for our own development, better today than yesterday; that is why there is more international trade giving rise to increased activities at the ports today than yesterday; that is why, from the reports of the Auditor General to the activities of the Public Accounts Committee of this Honourable House, transparency and accountability are greater today than yesterday.

Mr. Speaker,

We belong to a political tradition that is committed to enhancing the rights and capabilities of the common man and woman, and tangible evidence thereof abound. We prioritized the small holder commercialization programme to improve the livelihood of the ordinary farmer; we introduced the free health care to improve access to health care for the ordinary woman and child; we are paying school subsidies to reduce the burden of fees on the ordinary parents; we are paying for the NPSE, BECE and WASSCE to ensure the children of the common man and woman get a chance at taking the exams; in our Agenda for Prosperity we prioritized social protection to secure the common man and woman; we established the Open Government Initiative to listen to the voice of the common man and woman. We seek to include everyone in the expansion of the formal economy and expand access to formal financial services for all; that is why a National Financial Inclusion committee has been constituted in the Bank of Sierra Leone with the aim of developing a national financial inclusion strategy. We envisage a country where every citizen will have an account with the banks; a country of entrepreneurs effective at accessing finances for their job creating enterprises.

We are a government that firmly believes that to build the capacities of the common man and woman, we need to grow the economy and generate the revenues to sustain and expand our investments in the people.

Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members,

No country is attractive to investors just because it has great natural resources. A country also has to be investor-friendly to attract investments; it has to be open for business; it has to provide protection for investors; it has to offer possibilities of greater returns for investors to choose it over other countries. That is what we have been doing, and that is why we have attracted investments worth hundreds of millions of dollars, more than any time in the country's history.

But we also know that good governance is a continuous adjustment for greater returns for the people of a country. For that reason, we have been reviewing agreements with mining companies that are increasing returns to the government and people. That is why we seek to tighten loopholes in our revenue generation mechanisms; that is why we designed the local content policy. This is good for the country. We will continue to be investor-friendly, for that is the way to increase the revenues that are needed for investment in our people's education, health and general wellbeing.

Mr. Speaker,

There are times when we have been slowed down by old habits; there are moments when some amongst us have been inhibited by inattentiveness to the urgency of the task at hand; there have been occasions when some agencies and groups of people have taken steps backwards rather than move forward; but my government as a whole has moved forward with the transformation of this country. Suffice it to say that we are amongst the fastest growing economies in the world; the Mo Ibrahim Index rated us as having the third fastest improving governance score in the last six years; the World Bank Doing Business Index rated us as amongst the best in protecting investors; we have been elevated from a weak to a medium performing country in 2013 by the World Bank; and, we have moved up ten places in the Human Development Index of the United Nations.

I am the first to admit that we still face many challenges; that we are not yet at the summit of achievements; that there is still a way to go to bring home the fruits of this country's immense potential. But we are moving forward, and let no one stand in our way; this sun will shine through the bleakest clouds; this sun will continue to rise and

rise and rise; this government is committed to implementation; and we will achieve the objectives set forth in the Eight Pillars of the Agenda for Prosperity.

Permit me now, Mr. Speaker, to move into the specifics of some of our achievements for the preceding years and our programme to move forward the Pillars of the Agenda for Prosperity in the coming year.

PILLAR ONE: ECONOMIC DIVERSIFICATION

In spite of the uncertainties in the global economy, the Sierra Leone economy remained resilient and relatively stable. The economy grew strongly by 15.2 percent in 2012, and is on course to achieve the projected growth rate of 13.3 percent for 2013. The economic future of our country looks very bright. Because my government is improving the business climate and scaling up investment in infrastructure and agricultural productivity, real GDP is projected to increase to 14.0 percent in 2014, and 12.4 percent in 2015 before returning to 7.5 percent in 2016.

Inflation fell to a single digit of 9.4 percent in October 2013, the first time since December 2009, when the food and fuel crises triggered sharp increases in inflation. Exports also increased sharply by 147 percent in 2012. This trend continued into the first half of 2013, with the value of exports almost doubling relative to the corresponding period in 2012. The exchange rate of the Leone to the US Dollar and other international currencies remained relatively stable during the period.

Significant milestones have been achieved towards the modernization of the Payments System Infrastructure in Sierra Leone. The completion of the Payments System Project will contribute immensely towards enhancing efficiencies in the economy by increasing the speed and security of financial transactions. The average commercial banks lending and deposit rates declined. This is expected to drive expansion in private sector credit and growth.

Domestic revenue collection continues to improve from 11.5 percent of GDP in 2011 to 12.2 percent of GDP in 2012 and is expected to reach 12.5 percent of GDP in 2013.

As a result of our dedication to getting more from our own resources to fund the country's programmes, NRA's revenue collection has grown considerably to Le1.87 trillion in 2012. The NRA's contribution to Government expenditure has kept on increasing, reaching 70% in 2012. In the first six months of the current year, domestic revenue contribution to government expenditure is slightly over 80 percent. The NRA collected Le1.081 trillion against a target of Le1.042 trillion. We will stay focused on increasing revenues to fund our programmes until we

can fund 100% of our development programme.

Mr. Speaker,

In November this year, I instructed the organization of a Conference on an Integrated and Comprehensive Plan for the Sustainable Growth of Agriculture, Fisheries and Industry through Innovation and Education. I charged the participants to not only come up with strategies for increasing production, but also plans for adding value to the products in ways that are informed by innovation, science, technology, entrepreneurship and respect for the environment. Sustainable wealth creation in our country depends on adding value to our primary production; more wealth and jobs are created with the agro-processing of rice, cocoa, coffee, ginger and fisheries products. This integrated plan for creating synergies of excellence between agriculture, fisheries and industry is currently being put together, and its implementation will be coordinated from my office.

Agriculture

Mr. Speaker,

In Agriculture, our policies and actions have ensured that the primary production of major crops and other agricultural products has more than doubled the 2007 figures. The country now exports high grade quality cocoa and coffee, fetching high prices from the world market more than at any time in the nation's history.

According to the joint assessment by Government, the Food and Agriculture Organization, the World Health Organization and others, our efforts in the agricultural sector have paid off significantly. During my first five years in office, food production generally increased by between 34 and 40 percent compared to the previous five years and this trend has continued.

Private sector participation in agriculture continues to expand. Investors have not only made substantial investments in the agricultural sector but have also created employment opportunities for Sierra Leoneans.

Alongside the support for smallholder commodity commercialization, support is being provided for the medium and large scale farmers through hire purchase schemes which have made it possible for them to own tractors and medium-size rice mills.

We still face challenges. But we are determined to sustain our progress by focusing on raising the quantity of value added products in agriculture.

Marine Resources

Mr. Speaker,

As with Agriculture, we are also taking actions to make Marine Resources pivotal to the attainment of the goals of growing the economy through diversification and value addition. This includes review of fisheries legislation and policy; development of a five-year strategic plan for fisheries development and management; fisheries stock assessment; Management and Functional Review of the Ministry; development of an aquaculture investment strategy; and construction of fish harbour complex at Murray Town.

In relation to the challenge of ensuring Fish Export to the EU and other International Markets, we have engaged an international company to enhance standard of fish handling that can help Sierra Leone to meet minimum export requirements.

To address Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated (IUU) Fishing we have put in place a number of measures including active participation in sub-regional patrols and use of high tech equipment for 24 hour vessel monitoring at JMC. We have also signed a contract for the procurement of a US\$6.5 million ultra-modern fast patrol vessel to surveillance the entire 200 nautical miles Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) of Sierra Leone.

Trade

Mr. Speaker,

We are accelerating the establishment of growth centres to hasten the pace of economic growth and poverty alleviation through manufacturing, processing, promotion of employment and income generating activities in the micro, small and medium-scale Enterprises (MSME). In April 2013, I formally opened the largest Growth Centre in Bo.

In our bid to effectively promote, develop and designate standards, we are establishing a Metrology Testing and Calibration Laboratory in the Sierra Leone Standards Bureau. We have also established Microbiology and Chemical Testing Laboratories.

Our local content-policy is bringing about an increased use of local products in manufacturing industries. The Cement Factory is using 20% of local granite, Brewery 80% of local sorghum, and alcohol industries an increased use of locally manufactured sugar. But there are remaining challenges. That is why we are preparing a local content law for effective enforcement of local content regulations.

We have repealed the SLPMB Act and the Sierra Leone Produce Marketing Company established by my Government in 2009, has been successful in the trading of export produce such as cocoa and coffee. The company is also pioneering the packaging of local rice and palm oil to enhance their marketability.

SLIEPA has continued to market Sierra Leone as a favourable investment destination. The World Investment Report 2013 published annually by the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) showed increase in Sierra Leone's Foreign Direct Investment from USD\$ 238million in 2010 to US\$ 740 million in 2013.

Mr. Speaker, this country is on the move, and let no one stand in our way.

PILLAR TWO: MANAGING NATURAL RESOURCES

Minerals

Mr. Speaker,

The recent reforms and on-going projects in the Ministry of Mines and Mineral Resources have resulted in huge national developmental preparedness to achieve the Agenda for Prosperity, including, new Mines and Minerals Act 2009, a new National Minerals Agency Act 2012, Operational Regulations, Social and Environmental Regulations, a new Precious Minerals Trading Bill, a new Resettlement Policy, a new National Minerals Agency, the Mining Cadastre, and an On-Line Repository and Administration System.

The Ministry has now embarked on its new challenges of the management of our Mineral Resources, including: ensuring that Sierra Leone's mineral wealth supports national economic and social development in a sustainable manner; promoting employment; making sure that the mining sector is transparent and accountable; promoting good investment and the Local Content Policy.

The Environment

Mr. Speaker,

A National Protected Area Authority (NPAA) is being established for the effective management of our forestry reserves nationwide; and the delineation of the four declared Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) is in progress.

We are ensuring that the Sierra Leone Maritime Administration builds the technical capacity of personnel in the newly created Marine Environment Protection Department to cope with combating marine oil pollution and other

accidental and intentional discharges from ships.

We are also strengthening the capacities of the Sierra Leone Environmental Protection Agency and the Meteorological Department to lead the fight for the environment in Sierra Leone.

PILLAR THREE HUMAN DEVELOPMENT

Health

Mr. Speaker,

First, let me give an account of what we achieved in the health sector in the year under review.

- We designed The National Strategy for the Reduction of Teenage Pregnancy;
- We established the Directorate of Nutrition with a view to scaling up nutrition and plans are at an advanced stage to establish an environment and sanitation directorate;
- We established an Integrated Health Project Administration Unit to coordinate and improve transparency and efficient use of support from development partners;
- We constructed new maternity units in Port Loko, Magburaka, Bo, Bonthe and Kenema district hospitals. Also, 20 new PHUs were constructed. Additionally, 5 hospitals and 14 CHCs have been upgraded.;
- We upgraded and strengthened the District Health Information System (DHIS);
- We made significant progress in the fight against malaria. The infection rate has decreased to 43% slightly above the MDG target of 35.8%. With sustained effort, we are on track to achieve the MDG target by 2015;

In relation to Human Resources, we established and commenced rolling out the Integrated Human Resource Information System (IHRIS); 70 midwives graduated and were posted throughout the country; and we attracted 31 Cuban and 13 Nigerian doctors to fill the capacity gap of skilled personnel in health facilities;

We however still face challenges; but our Agenda for Prosperity symbolizes a promise renewed, a promise to enhance and improve the health of a people; a promise for better healthcare, especially for the most vulnerable groups in Sierra Leone. In renewing the promise in the Agenda for Prosperity, we have reinforced the roadmap for a healthier Sierra Leone, for a Sierra Leone that shall continually reduce mortality and morbidity amongst our

people. It is against this background that government increased allocation to the sector from 6.6% of total government expenditure in 2012 to around 10% in 2013.

HIV/AIDS

We have stabilized our national prevalence rate for HIV at 1.5% since 2005 and we continue to witness a decline among pregnant women from 3.5% in 2009 to 3.2% in 2012. We have also registered improved Progress on Treatment and Survival of People Living with HIV/AIDS.

We have ensured Global Recognition of Sierra Leone in our fight against HIV/AIDS. In April 2012, the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations elected Sierra Leone by acclamation to the UNAIDS Programme Coordinating Board for a three-year term beginning on January 1, 2013. Its purpose is to approve, modify, and assure the execution of the global strategy on HIV/AIDS.

Nutrition

Mr. Speaker,

As a way of stepping up our commitment to Food and Nutrition Security, Sierra Leone is now a member of the Global Scaling Up Nutrition (SUN) Movement. Accordingly, I am pleased to announce that we have established a functioning Scaling Up Nutrition Secretariat at the Office of the Vice President, which reinforces our high level of commitment to Food and Nutrition Security in Sierra Leone. Already, a National Food and Nutrition Security Policy has been designed, which will ensure, among other strategies, that the SUN message reaches every corner of Sierra Leone.

Education

Mr. Speaker,

Government has prepared a new Education Sector Plan (ESP) and associated Implementation Plan (IP). This plan spells out the direction for education in Sierra Leone in the next 5 years. Its main focus is on significantly improving the quality of education with student learning at its heart. From the ESP, we have derived a US\$ 17.9 million project which has been approved and a grant of the same amount awarded by the Board of Directors of the Global Partnership for Education (GPE).

In order to further transform education, the Ministry has been working with a private partner (Sierra Wifi) to

establish the first ever Education Intranet and Internet for Schools in Sierra Leone. Right now computers, servers, wi-fi, power supplies and solar panels are being installed in schools around the country.

In a bid to bring about much needed changes in higher education and provide new opportunities to talented youths, the Ministry has invited a university of creative technology from Malaysia to establish a campus in Sierra Leone. All plans are well advanced for the university to commence operations in February 2014.

My Government is also establishing a University of Science and Technology in the Northern Region. Necessary preparations have now been completed and sources of funding identified. A date for the commencement of the university will be announced soon. We have continued to prioritize support for students, especially women, in the sciences.

In the area of Technical and Vocational Education, Public Private Partnerships are increasing rapidly and being encouraged to grow even faster.

Ongoing analysis of the third consecutive school census indicates that schools and enrolment are increasing rapidly. Between 2010/11 and 2011/12 school years, overall enrolment in schools increased by 7%. Improvement in the enrolment of girls also took place between the 2010/11 and 2011/12 school years. We have continued to pay for all public exams by WAEC for our schools.

The Teacher Verification Exercise is coming to a close. In October 2013 alone Government saved Le. 851.3 million. This money would have gone to unscrupulous individuals, but these savings will now enable the government to recruit and pay genuine teachers.

Significant progress has also been made on the establishment of the Teaching Service Commission (TSC). A work-plan has been prepared; and a small team to guide the process has been established.

We know we still face challenges in education, but we are determined to overcome them;

Youths

Mr. Speaker,

Most of the programmes of my government are dedicated to the youths of this country. Two of the largest targets of the landmark free health care initiative, pregnant women and young mothers are overwhelmingly female youths who fall between the age bracket 18 and 35. Our payment of fees for all students taking WASSCE in schools are

for youths; the thousands of employment opportunities being created by mining, agriculture, road construction companies, and NaCSA's public work schemes are for our youths; our establishment of technical-vocational centers all over the country, and our public private partnerships for technical vocational education are targeted at improving the skill-sets of our youths; and we have given younger people leadership positions in the cabinet, in commissions, in parliament, and in our diplomatic missions.

This government has done more with youths and for youths than any other government in the nation's history.

But we know more needs to be done. That was why we set up a separate Ministry of Youth Affairs for greater focus on providing appropriate policies and programmes that will empower the young people and create employment opportunities; increase youth participation in governance and instil national consciousness, unity and patriotism in our young citizens. That was why I created the National Youth Commission to mobilize youths for inclusion and development. Earlier this year I appointed a Presidential Youth Aide to further strengthen youth engagement with my office.

My Government has reviewed the National Youth Policy of 2003 and youths were given the opportunity to make contribution on the issues that they think are affecting them. We also launched the first Status of Youth Report showing analysis, prioritized thematic areas and emerging opportunities in the country. Under the Youth Employment Support Project funded by the World Bank, over 20,000 youths have received temporary employment opportunities under Cash for Work and skills development programmes. We have continued to train youths under the Graduate Internship Program and hundreds of graduates are currently going through training and placements as interns with different private sector organizations.

We have secured a \$30million Chinese Grant for the development of a Youth Village and School of Excellence .

We are presently concluding the framework for the creation of a National Youth Service that will help to nurture positive attitude, patriotism, and facilitate career development that will help our youths to achieve their professional goals.

In order to ensure that our policies and national laws are aligned with the provision of the African Youth Charter, we will soon be laying this document in Parliament for Ratification.

This country is on the move; my Government has created a space for the youths; the youths must continue to seize the moment and move the transformation of our country. And let no one stand in their way.

Water Resources

Mr. Speaker,

We created a separate Ministry of Water Resources to underscore the importance that my Government attaches to the sustainable development of the country's water resources in improving the health and well-being of all Sierra Leoneans.

Though we still face challenges, our interventions have begun to show appreciable progress. A number of major water facilities in Kamakwei, Kambia, and Port Loko have already been commissioned. In the coming weeks several more of these facilities, funded by central government and Development Partners will be commissioned. Contracts on major water supply and sanitation schemes for Bo, Kenema and Makeni have also been awarded. In addition to what central government is providing, a number of interventions supported by the African Development Bank, DfID, UNICEF, and the Dutch Government are also underway, targeting our rural and small town communities.

The Guma Valley Water Company is improving its service delivery – including tripling its revenue collection, reducing leakages, and improving its customer care. Additionally, the establishment of the Water Directorate and recruitment of young professionals is providing the Ministry with the needed capacity to implement and monitor sector policy and progress.

We have the following plans for the sector: reviewing the Acts of Guma Valley Water Company and SALWACO; enactment of the National Water Resources Management Bill; and commencing operations of the Electricity and Water Commission as well as the proposed National Water Resources Management Agency.

We still face challenges Mr. Speaker, but we shall continue to make today better than yesterday.

PILLAR FOUR: INTERNATIONAL COMPETITIVENESS

INFRASTRUCTURE

We have changed the face of our provincial cities by ensuring they have several tarmac roads in Makeni, Bo, Magburaka, Kenema, Lunsar, Port Loko, Kambia, and Kailahun. Work is progressing in Koidu, Kabala, Moyamba and Pujehun. We have rehabilitated and continued with the reconstruction of many streets in Freetown. Work on a four lane Jomo Kenyatta-Hill Cot Junction-Regent road has commenced, and work on phase one of the Hillside

Bye Pass, from Jomo Kenyatta Road to Bambara Spring is over 70% done.

We are almost completing the Port Loko-Lungi Road; the Kenema-Pendembu Road, and the Regent-Kossoh Town Road. On going trunk roads projects include the Makeni-Kabala road rehabilitation, and reconstruction of Lumley Beach Road. The contractor for the Matotoka-Yeyie Road has fully mobilized and established a campsite. The contractors for the reconstruction of the Bandajuma-Pujehun Road, the Taiama-Njala University Road and the Rokupr Spur/Mange-Mambolo Road are being mobilized.

Roads at tendering stage for which we will commence reconstruction include Yeyie Sefadu Road, Pendembu-Kailahun Road, and the rehabilitation of Kissy Road, Fourah Bay Road, Mountain Cut and Macauley Street.

Feeder roads reconstruction are going on in all districts in the country. Other roads projects slated for reconstruction include the Bandajuma-MRU Bridge including Sewa Bridge and Bandajuma Bridge; and the rehabilitation of the Bo-Bandajuma Road, and the Tagrin- Lungi Road.

My Government has continued to increase funding allocation for road maintenance. In 2012, the budget allocation was Le 44.307Bn, in 2013, the budget was increased by 110% to Le 93.203Bn. In 2014, there will be a further increase of 21% to Le112.860Bn. For the first time in the history of the Road Fund, all Nineteen (19) Local Councils now receive funding from the Road Fund for the maintenance of rural feeder roads.

Funding has also been allocated for the complete overlay of twenty-five (25) streets in Central and Eastern Freetown.

Energy

Mr. Speaker,

The year 2013 was a challenging year for the electricity sector in Sierra Leone. As you all know, we experienced difficulties with the turbines at Bumbuna resulting in reduction of power generation and supply. We wish to report that we engaged a credible third party to conduct an independent assessment of the root causes of the turbine failure and it was concluded that the primary issue was due to design. We are pleased to report that that we have been able to conclude a partial rehabilitation of one of the units which is providing over 20MW daily. The second unit we hope to restore to service by the end of December 2013.

Progress has been made in training Sierra Leoneans on the operations and maintenance of Bumbuna. We are now

embarking on a process of transitioning full operational responsibility for Bumbuna into the hands of competent Sierra Leoneans.

Feasibility studies for Bumbuna Phase 2 have been 90 % completed and we are now in the process of finalizing costs for the construction. Likewise, we have been able to complete feasibility studies for Bekongkor III with an estimated installed capacity of 160MW. We are now searching for financing of these projects. Government of China-Granted projects of mini hydros in Charlotte and Bankasoka are progressing well and the team are now in the country to begin mobilization efforts for the rehabilitation of Makalie Mini hydro and Irrigation facility.

Mr. Speaker,

While hydro is cost effective, long construction lead times and low power output during the dry season has convinced us that we must deliver between 300MW and 500MW of thermal power within the next 36months to enable us meet the demands of the citizens and businesses for reliable electricity. We are also pleased to report that considerable progress has been made by Addax Bioenergy in the construction of their factory which will supply up to 15MW to the grid. The first 5MW should come on stream in March 2014.

In relation to transmission, we are pleased to confirm that this House has approved USD 120 Million of funding that my Government has secured from the European Investment Bank and African Development Bank to pay for our participation in the WAPP – Cote D'Ivoire , Liberia, Sierra Leone and Guinea interconnector line project which will cover a distance of 530Km within the borders of Sierra Leone with 5 sub stations.

We are also making meaningful progress in distribution. Lungi and Kono networks are complete and should be operational soon. Lunsar Network is also 85% complete. In the Western Area we have mobilized approximately over USD 50 Million of public and private funding which can help improve the network. The BKPS network has also benefited from some additional support and is lined up to receive substantial support in 2014. The Government has also secured a further USD 21.8 Million from ECOWAS which we expect to begin to draw down in the first quarter of 2014.

We are pleased to report that for the first time in history the Ministry now has an Energy Directorate with professional staff. Now we will accelerate our efforts to restructure the sector to further improve performance.

Information and Communication

Mr. Speaker,

The Ministry of Information and Communications in collaboration with the Human Resource Management Office has established an Information Communications Cadre (ICT) within the Civil Service with an attractive remuneration package to attract the best brains in the country.

With support from the China-Exim Bank, we have commenced the implementation of the National Fibre Optic Backbone Project.

Further, the Islamic Development Bank is funding a fibre Optic network infrastructure that interconnects the cities of ECOWAS Member States specifically, Freetown, Monrovia and Conakry.

A dedicated security network that covers the entire country has been developed for the Government of Sierra Leone. The security sector can now use a secured voice communication network to perform their duties.

The Government Printing Department through a Public Private Partnership agreement with Excellent Printing Services of Ghana has been rehabilitated and modernized to make it commercially viable.

We are also dedicated to fully utilize The Electromagnetic Spectrum which has been classified as the “new oil for Africa” to generate revenue for Government. Licenses fees for use of our electromagnetic spectrum will be reviewed and its use properly monitored to benefit the end users.

We also intend to review our current Telecommunications Act 2006 to cover all aspects of Communications in the country. The revised bill when enacted by Parliament will be renamed the “Electronic Communications Law”.

TRANSPORT

Ports

Mr. Speaker,

Our transformation of ports management in the country has resulted in significant improvement in the overall performance of the ports in most areas of operation. The Sierra Leone Ports Authority plans to achieve the following projects within the broader framework of the SLPA Master Plan:

General restructuring of the authority; rehabilitation of the existing oil terminal (Kissy Oil Jetty); construction of a new oil jetty to cater for existing market and envisaged new products such as bio-fuels and edible oils; construction of a new SLPA Head Office Complex outside the operational area at the quay; procurement of Environmental

Management Equipment to meet environmental standards in line with international standards; extension of 4 berths east and westwards of the Queen Elizabeth II quay for general/bulk and multipurpose berths; concession of the Marine Slipway (Ship repair yard); construction of a Container Logistic Centre at Waterloo-Newton Axis to reduce container congestion at Queen Elizabeth II Quay.

Road Transport

Mr. Speaker,

Whilst we have revamped the Road Transport Corporation by building passenger terminals, increasing fleet of buses and opening new routes to a number of towns; we are committed to mass acquisition of additional fleet of buses to cater for the travelling public. We will also ensure that the Road Transport Corporation diversify utilization of its assets to enhance non-core revenue generation and capacity, which includes provision of courier services, property renting, repairs and service of private and government vehicles and training of youths and school leavers as technicians and mechanics for leading institutions.

Airports

Mr. Speaker,

We have completely transformed the international gateway to the country and significantly ensured increases in the numbers of aircrafts coming to the country. We have almost completed the rehabilitation and expansion of the Passenger Terminal Building to reduce congestion and make up for the anticipated increase in future traffic. This has also tremendously improved passenger comfort, safety and security.

Maritime Administration

Mr. Speaker,

We have ensured that the Sierra Leone Maritime Administration is now fully capable of applying all International maritime regulatory instruments to which Sierra Leone is a party, and this has resulted in a decline in vessel detention rates in foreign ports.

In previous years, lives and properties perished at sea due to avoidable causes of maritime accident. However, with our expansion of the Administration by increasing its manpower and asset deployment to meet its nationwide mandate, the rate of response by our dedicated team of Search and Rescue personnel and volunteers throughout the

riverine districts of Sierra Leone have significantly reduced the number of fatalities.

Future direction for the Maritime Administration also includes establishing regional offices in Bonthe for the Southern Province; and Kambia in the Northern Province.

PILLAR FIVE: LABOUR AND EMPLOYMENT

Last week, my Government signed a \$1.3 billion with the Hainan Rubber Industry Group and several other Chinese companies to cultivate rubber and rice and build factories that will create a projected 30,000 jobs in the country. This is an example of what my Government has been doing: attracting investments, from mining to agriculture, road construction, industry, banking, and communications that create jobs for our people. My Government has through this strategy created more jobs in this country in the last few years than at anytime in the country's history.

We have also designed the local content policy to ensure that Sierra Leoneans have preferential access to these jobs.

We are also designing and implementing programmes that are improving the skills set of our people. This includes public private partnerships with companies on appropriate training and our support for technical and vocational training.

Most of the jobs are emerging jobs that are either new to most Sierra Leoneans or that were never in this country. But today our people are becoming train drivers again; they are becoming employed as geologists and mining engineers again; they are becoming rail repairers again; and they are gaining greater hope in the possibilities of employment in places other than government workplaces. That is our goal: to make sure that the overwhelming majority of workers in the formal sector are employed by the private sector.

We still face challenges; our universities have to join the race for producing graduates with appropriate skills; our technical vocational centers have to step up their skills training programmes; and citizens must opt for skills and training that make them employable. As I stated in my Address to the Conference on Innovation: all education is good; but relevant education is better.

PILLAR SIX: SOCIAL PROTECTION

Reparations for civilian victims of the war

To further consolidate government's effort in the Social Protection landscape of the Country, a National Social Protection Secretariat has been established and this is hosted at the headquarters of the National Commission for

Social Action (NaCSA) in Freetown.

In 2012, Government through NaCSA ensured a total of 12,398 war victims received micro grants and livelihood support. This included amputees, severely war wounded, War widows, sexually violated women, child victims, with education support as part of government's reparations package.

International Protection of Refugees

With immense support from UNHCR, Government deepened the search for durable solutions to the plight of Liberian Refugees in Sierra Leone through the Local Integration scheme for all Liberian Refugees who demonstrated interest in locally integrating into various Sierra Leonean communities. As the agency responsible for implementing the Refugee Protection Act 2007, NaCSA has established systems and structures that will continue to attenuate the plights of refugees and asylum seekers from other countries.

PILLAR SEVEN: GOVERNANCE AND PUBLIC SERVICE REFORM

Mr. Speaker,

My Government has been implementing wide-ranging structural reforms including public financial management, financial sector, business regulatory, governance, public sector and public enterprise reforms. We have undertaken several public financial management (PFM) reforms at both the central Government and the Local Councils to ensure efficiency, transparency and accountability in the use of public resources. A comprehensive Public Financial Management Law has been prepared to address the inadequacies of the Government Budgeting and Accountability Act, 2005. We are making provisions within the Act for the establishment of a Transformation and Development Fund to support the transparent management of the expected higher revenues from the mining and petroleum sectors.

We have made significant progress in improving the public procurement function of Government. We will soon table a bill before this Honourable House to further strengthen the regulatory aspect of public procurement.

Mr. Speaker,

My Government is committed to sustaining the reforms and meeting the remaining challenges. We have formulated a medium-term PFM strategy, under the proposed PFM Improvement and Consolidation Project. The project, amongst others, will support new reforms including the establishment of a Single Treasury Account and a system for managing and monitoring Government contracts.

We are implementing reforms to strengthen tax administration, including efforts to reduce discretionary tax and duty waivers. We have already prepared a consolidated Extractive Industry Revenue Bill, which will soon be submitted to Parliament for enactment. In addition, Government will establish a Resource Revenue Administration Unit in the National Revenue Authority to ensure the effective, accurate and transparent administration of taxes due from mining and petroleum activities. We are also preparing a Consolidated Revenue Administration Bill to update and strengthen the legal framework for tax administration.

In order to further align the central bank's regulatory functions with international best practice, the following bills will be brought before this Honourable House: The Borrowers and Lenders Bill; The Securities and Exchange Bill; and The Collective Investment Bill.

Mr. Speaker,

A key aspect of our Public Service Reforms is the development of the human resource capacity of the public service through the Public Sector Reform Programme (PSRP); and the Civil Service Reform Programme (CSRP). The HRMO is currently implementing two key projects namely: the Pay and Performance Project; and the European Union/GoSL Support to the Civil Service Reform Programme.

With these two Projects, together with other reform actions taken by the HRMO, the following achievements have been made: recruitment of staff into key posts in the middle and senior cadres of the civil service in collaboration with PSC; and cascading Performance Management Appraisal system to the civil service to ensure both individual and collective accountability. Furthermore, Performance Contracts have been signed with Permanent Secretaries and Professional Heads.

We have also restructured the Office of the Chief of Staff at State House, creating a separate Directorate of Performance Management to strengthen our coordination and implementation of performance management in MDAs.

This country is on the move, and let no one stand in our way, be they in the private sector or in government. We will achieve the objectives set forth in the Agenda for Prosperity.

Law and Justice

Mr. Speaker,

We have revised the Criminal Procedure Act which we will table before this Honourable House. The Act will

introduce alternative sentencing and a shortened form of preliminary investigations that will reduce backlog cases and generally improve the administration of justice.

We have established the Constitution Review Committee to work towards a review of the 1991 constitution to reflect emerging good governance and democratic practices.

My Government in collaboration with the UN and the Special Court Management Committee has established the Residual Special Court following the closing of the Special Court For Sierra Leone.

My Government is working towards securing funds for automating records in the Justice Sector and on ensuring updated Law Reports

The Fight Against Corruption

Mr. Speaker,

My government has taken actions, more than any other government in the nation's history to defeat systemic corruption. We have ensured the highest levels of prosecutions and convictions ever. The Anti-Corruption Commission's conviction records indicate a prominent increase in convictions, most of which represent instances of high-level corruption involving professionals, technocrats, and senior public servants. The indictment side has also seen similar increasing trend; from five in 2010; eleven in 2011; ten in 2012 and already fifteen so far this year. Presently, the Anti-Corruption Commission has 33 active cases being prosecuted in courts nationwide.

Mr. Speaker,

There has been a progressive expansion of anti-corruption advocacy into the country's 14 administrative districts across the four regions of West, North, South and East. Also, resulting from published reports of systems review undertaken on the operations of various MDAs, periodic monitoring is now a standardized activity. There has been a remarkable extension of Service Charters to all regional and district hospitals, National Power Authority and the BKPS. A three-Year Communications Strategy has enhanced the scope of citizens reached via different media.

Integrity Management Committees have been established in all MDAs and Local Councils including the Office of the President.

Reflecting this outcome is the improved rating of Sierra Leone on Transparency International's annual Corruption Perception Index, rising from 1.9 in 2008 to 3.1 in 2012. When we took over in 2007, Sierra Leone was in the bottom rungs of countries in the Corruption Perception Survey. In 2008, we were ranked 158; in 2009 we were at

146, in 2010; we had jumped to 134; in 2012, we were at 123 and today in 2013 we are at 119.

We still face challenges; international Anti Corruption Indicators show mixed results for our efforts, and we will need to do more to sustain and improve on the achievements we have made since we came into office. We must stay the course. That is why we will enhance training for investigators and prosecutors, seek greater collaboration with reputable international anti corruption agencies, and facilitate judicial reforms and restructuring to strengthen resolve to fight corruption. This country is on move, we will allow no one to take us back.

Audit Service

Mr. Speaker

Our actions for integrity in the country in general and public service delivery in particular are also manifest in the work of the Audit Service Sierra Leone.

Despite some challenges, notable results have been achieved. Audit Service staff are now more professional than ever before. The Audit service is now carrying out more credible and high quality audits over a wider range of areas, including the completion and submission of eighteen Local Council Accounts for the financial year 2012. The Auditor General's reports are now more widely available and published on a timely basis.

Let me applaud Parliament for ensuring that the Deliberations by its Public Accounts Committee (PAC) are now in an open hearing to display transparency.

We have ensured the establishment of a Performance Audit Division within the Audit Service. Five performance audit reports were laid before Parliament and published during the year 2012.

Future direction for the Audit Service includes embarking on new audit areas and widening audit work to include banks, insurance companies and other donor funded projects.

Public Enterprise Reform

Mr. Speaker,

Key outlook for 2014 Public Enterprise Reforms shall include the following:

- Completing the divestiture of the National Insurance Company Limited, the Rokel Commercial Bank and Mining and General Services Company;
- Putting in place modalities for the resuscitation of the National Development Bank to cater for

the medium and long-term financing gap of the economy, in line with the Agenda for Prosperity;

Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation

Mr. Speaker,

In the last twelve months, I made transformative visits to a number of countries, including the United States, the Peoples Republic of China, and the UAE, bringing in developmental and other dividends for our country.

As a Government of Infrastructure, we have commenced the construction of buildings for our missions in Liberia and Ethiopia; and we have secured funding from the People's Republic of China for rehabilitation of our Mission to the United Nations in New York.

We are expanding our diplomatic reach by opening new missions in South Korea and the United Arab Emirates. We have continued to lead Africa's effort at reforming the United Nations; continued to send peace-keeping troops, and continued our efforts at sustaining international peace and security.

We envision a Renaissance of the Sierra Leone Foreign Service. We will focus on policy options and engagements that will promote trade and investment opportunities, mobilize support and resources for the implementation of the national strategic framework, the Agenda for Prosperity, and reposition Sierra Leone as a strategic partner in the global community.

Mr. Speaker,

We applaud the continued friendship and support of the governments and peoples of United Kingdom, the Peoples Republic of China, the Federal Republic of Nigeria, the United States, Federal Republic of

Germany, Guinea, Liberia, Japan, India, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and countries in the African Union. Let me also use this opportunity to register our appreciation of the support provided by DFID, the European Commission, the African Development Bank, USAID, GIZ, the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, BADEA, JICA, Irish Aid, and the Islamic Development Bank.

Security and Defence

Mr. Speaker,

No country can prosper without a dedicated police force. Though there are still challenges, we salute the Police Force for helping this country ensure that the crime rate, especially violent crime, is one of the lowest in the sub

region.

This is because this country has put a lot of resources into the Police Force. Since 2007 the numerical strength of the Sierra Leone Police has steadily increased from 7,500 to 12,500 in 2012. The recurrent budget of the Sierra Leone Police has also been increased.

My government has not only restored monthly rice supply to all members of the security forces but have also effected a minimum wage of six hundred thousand Leones which represents over seventy-five percent increase for all front line officers. It is our objective that this wage increase will result to reduced corruption in the force. This is important; the police force is the face of Government in our streets and communities; reduced corruption in the force will result in reduced corruption across the board all over the country. My government is determined to ensure this, including installation of cameras in strategic locations, sting operations by ACC personnel; anti-corruption focal persons within the force, and inclusive monitoring systems involving citizens from every walk of life.

Mindful of the need for enhancing the competitiveness of the police to match up with modern trends in policing my government has provided funds for the establishment of a police academy which when completed would serve as a centre of learning excellence in the sub region.

In order to improve on public order management in the Sierra Leone Police the International Security Advisory Team has consented to leading a review of the Operations Support Department and terms of reference for the review are being developed.

Mr. Speaker,

Our troops have continued to make us proud in International Peacekeeping duties, and in the process re-establishing our image as a country committed to global peace and security. The RSLAF recently deployed an infantry battalion to the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM), following successful spells with UNAMID. The Republic of Sierra Leone Armed Forces also currently deploys Staff Officers to the United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNAMIS); United Nations Mission in Nepal (UNMIN) and the United Nations Integrated Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) . The RSLAF has also received offers to deploy a motorized Infantry Battalion in Sudan, a motorized Company in Guinea Bissau and a maintenance platoon in Mali.

In line with our national objectives the RSLAF commenced large scale mechanized farming at Motobon and Mabang respectively. Government has also secured equipment for the establishment of an Engineer Company for

the RSLAF that will participate in major road construction and other Civil works across the country.

Acknowledging accommodation constraints for troops, Government is embarking on the construction of Housing Units at both the Wilberforce and Gondama barracks. Additionally, the Ministry of Defence is also currently receiving proposals for the construction of a battalion size barracks in Kambia.

We still face challenges in the sector, as sustaining an efficient security network requires huge budgetary outlay; but our commitment to provide for our gallant armed forces is unshakeable. We salute the ever loyal and gallant Republic of Sierra Leone Armed Forces for continuing to play an important role in cementing our Nation's post conflict recovery strides.

Deepening Decentralization

Local Councils have over the years been faced with the huge challenge of attracting and retaining core staff due to unattractive conditions of service including difficulty in securing accommodation especially in the remotely located Councils. To address this issue, my Government is providing support towards the construction of staff quarters and related facilities for the Local Councils.

Government is commencing efforts to secure regular payment of allowances to Paramount Chiefs and certain chieftom functionaries. Government in collaboration with the National Council of Paramount Chiefs has developed and launched a Code of Ethics and Service Standards for Chiefs nationwide.

Moving forward, my Government will emphasize fast-tracking the harmonization of all laws/regulation that conflict with LGA 2004; and the strengthening of the devolution process, including personnel devolution. Government will also strengthen the role of Parliamentarians in the decentralization process and this is already reflected in the on-going review of the Local Government Act.

PILLAR EIGHT: GENDER EQUALITY AND WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT

Mr. Speaker,

During the implementation of the Agenda for Change, my Government made remarkable strides in promoting women and girls in an effort to closing the gender disparity nationally. Notably, women were appointed in substantive positions at all levels of decision-making including Ministerial, Judicial, Security Sector, Commissions, Heads of Agencies and Departments, Boards of Directors, Diplomatic Service and more. This momentum was even emulated in non-state bodies with the election of the first female President of the Sierra Leone Football Association. Recognizing the low representation and participation of women in decision-making, I have committed

myself to signing the Minimum 30% quota into law after enactment by this parliament.

Mr. Speaker, as my Government commences the implementation of the Agenda for Prosperity we have adopted the two-prong approach of mainstreaming Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment across all other pillars as well as making it a National Priority Pillar. Today, I can inform you that our proactive twin-approach in promoting Gender and Women's Rights has been acknowledged as best practice by the United Nations Economic Community for Africa in promoting the One African Position for the Post- 2015 Agenda. Sierra Leone has been elected for the first time Vice Chair of the Bureau of the United Nations Economic Committee on Women and Development and we will lead the advocacy for promoting the integration of Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment in the Post -2015 Agenda.

Financing gender is a critical issue in promoting Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment. This is why I have directed the establishment of the Women's Empowerment Fund (WEF) which together with the Youth Fund was recently tabled before this House.

CONCLUSION

Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members of Parliament, Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen,

Last week I attended the funeral service for a great African, President Nelson Mandela. The measure of his life was the heights he scaled to move his people to the realization of their aspirations; and in so doing he restored his country's dignity in the eyes of the world; a great country blighted by the deprivations of apartheid became an example of progressive politics. What led Mandela to take that great role came on in little pieces; in little indignities he suffered as a black man, until one day he took the decision to join the battle for dignity, progress, and democracy.

Every nation has that which blights its credentials, every nation has that which hinders its progress, and it is the call of progressive men and women to remove these hindrances and unleash the energies of their people for achieving the full potentials of their humanity.

Many amongst us have usually been taken aback by the irritations and inconveniences of living in a country with a promise of greatness but a reality of great limitations for the overwhelming majority of our fellow citizens. A friend of mine, a brilliant Sierra Leonean Professor in a world renowned university once narrated his embarrassment at being asked by a student enthused by the wise audacity of his lectures: How come, sir, that with such brilliance, your nation is at the bottom rung of many human endeavours? This is a question so many of us have pondered?

How come with so many of our people excelling all over the world, from medicine to languages, to computer science, to engineering, and international administration that our country got stuck for so long at the bottom rungs of human achievements? How come that a people so tolerant and peaceful, a people famed for their hospitality and their will to happiness could have a war that shocked the world; a war waged by less than one percent amongst us; and yet so devastating for over 99% of the people of this country? How come we had a military junta that carried out extra-judicial killings? How come that a nation blessed with such rich natural resources have so many poor people?

I joined politics to lend my skills to putting a stop to the pain of these contradictions. We are in politics to end the indignity of being at the bottom rung of many indicators of human progress. Today, we are climbing up the ladder. In 2012 we moved up ten places from the bottom of the United Nations Development Index; since 2008, we have moved up from being the 158th nation in Transparency's International Corruption Perception Index to being 119 today. We still have challenges; we still have to move from the bottom rungs of mortality and morbidity indicators, but we have acted with great commitment in establishing the free health care initiative, and we believe that newer comprehensive statistics on our health indicators would register the achievements we have made in this area. We need all hands on deck to move the country forward. It is not about the APC or the Government; it is about our beloved Sierra Leone, her sustained development and the legacy that we want to pass on to generations yet unborn.

But, Mr. Speaker, the job at hand is not only to get off the bottom rungs; the endeavor is also to re-assert what this country was known for: the country that is the first in many fields of endeavours and achievements, first to build a boys secondary in West Africa, first to build a girls secondary school in the whole of Africa, first to build a modern University in sub Saharan Africa, first to establish a broadcasting station, first to elect an African Mayor of its capital, first to elect a female mayor.

That is our vision, to restore our image as a nation of firsts.

We are amongst the first nations to institute free health care for pregnant women, lactating mothers and children under five; we are amongst the fastest growing economies in the world; we are amongst the most religiously tolerant nations in the world, we are amongst the first nations to have a female Brigadier General and Chief Justice, and we are a leading nation for the protection of investors in Africa. We should continue to restore this country to the realm of the firsts in the positive fields of human endeavours. That is the ultimate aim of the vision set forth in our Agenda for Prosperity.

We committed ourselves, all of us, on the nation's Fiftieth Anniversary, during the Conference on Development

and Transformation to become a middle-income country by 2035, and a donor nation thereafter. Our Agenda for Prosperity reflects those goals and we have started work on many of the recommendations of the conference: from commencing review of agreements with companies to establishment of the Transformation Fund, the Women's Empowerment Fund and the Special Youth Fund, we have commenced the journey. It shall be a challenging journey, for we need to overcome many obstacles; we need to overcome the fear of thinking big in this country; we need to overcome the tendency to act small; we need to reassert those values that once made this nation a pioneer in many fields of endeavours along the West Coast of Africa.

It is within our heritage to do this; our forbearers led mighty nations; so too may we; our forbearers, from Thomas Peters to Bai Bureh and Nyagua stood up for freedom and liberty, so too may we; our forbearers, from Manga Sewa of Solima Yalunka to Isaac Theophilus Akuna Wallace-Johnson of Wilberforce stood up for justice, so too may we; citizens that many of us here present today were fortunate to behold, from Davidson Nicol to John Karefa Smart, Reverend Canon Harry Sawyer, Hannah Benka-Coker and Lati Hyde-Forster spread knowledge far and wide, so too may we. Religious leaders whose sermons many amongst here were honoured to witness, from Bishop Keili to Sheikh Gibril Sesay and the Reverend Joseph Sedu Mans entrenched the virtues of religious tolerance and moral excellence, so too may we. Sulaiman Rogers, Ebenezer Calendar, and Salia attained excellence in their fields of endeavour, so too may we. So too may we show forth the good in Sierra Leone. We pledge our devotion, our strength and our might, Land that we love, Our Sierra Leone. God Bless Sierra Leone.