

Presidential Address Delivered By His Excellency the President Dr. Ernest Bai Koroma President of the Republic and Commander-in-Chief of the Republic of Sierra Leone Armed Forces On the Occasion of the State Opening In the Chamber of Parliament Building Tower Hill, Freetown On Friday, 8th October; 2010.

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:

I am very delighted to be amongst the honourable representatives of the people of our beloved motherland. As President, and a Parliamentarian myself, I feel the pulse of this House for action. I come to this great assembly with enthusiasm for action. My address to this House today will lay emphasis on the imperative for focused action, robust implementation and successful completion of the projects we have rolled out in every corner of Sierra Leone. I come here seeking your continued support and participation in our partnership for implementation.

2. Mr. Speaker, our world continues to face unprecedented challenges – rises in food and fuel prices; the global credit crunch, collapse of financial markets, the see-saw of unending conflict and inconclusive peace talks in the Middle East; tensions precipitated by upcoming elections in the Sudan and our sister Republic of Guinea; violence in the Great Lakes and Somalia, and extreme weather events that are destroying lives and livelihoods all over the globe. These events are no respecter of boundaries; pollution and degradation triggered in one end of the earth could cause untold suffering thousands of miles away. Wars in one part of the globe cause suffering and traumatic anxieties all over the world. The era of local actions having local consequences is truly over.

3. Mr. Speaker, this is why we are demanding more inclusive and responsive global instruments to meet current global challenges. As Chairman of the AU Committee of Ten charged with presenting Africa's position on the Reform of the UN, I have presented Africa's case for permanent seats in the security council, not only to redress the historic marginalization of our continent in the halls of global governance; but also as a means of active participation in addressing challenges of global security, prosperity and sustainable development.

4. Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members of Parliament, we are a nation of almost six million people, but our aspirations for security, democracy, prosperity and sustainable development are as strong as any nation in the world. Three years ago, we took up governance of this nation just as the world was entering a period of profound crisis. But the strength of our people's aspirations for change, and our commitment to those aspirations enabled this country to weather the storm.

5. In the midst of the multiple challenges, we published 'An Agenda for Change', as our vision for the large-scale transformation of our country. Almost every sector in our country needed transformation; but we had to choose as priorities the sectors that would have the greatest positive impact on the lives of our people: agriculture, energy, infrastructure, health and education.

6. Mr. Speaker, we rolled out our programmes based on these priorities. Today, in every region of this beautiful country, positive transformations are underway in the priority sectors of the Agenda for Change. Roads are being constructed in every region; electricity generation is being increased and expanded; pregnant women, lactating mothers and children under five from every town and village are benefitting from our Free Health Care Initiative; we have rolled out our Smallholder Commercialization Programme to move farmers everywhere in this country from the poverty of subsistence agriculture to the immense promise of commercialized farming; and we have started the overhaul of the educational system as contained in our White Paper on the Professor Gbamanja Commission of Inquiry.

7. We have, as a people made enormous progress that is lauded all over the world. The Global Peace Index now ranks Sierra Leone as one of the most peaceful countries in the world; the Mo Ibrahim Index records that we are one of the five crisis affected countries that have made a significant leap forward in democratic governance; the recent IMF review shows improvement in public finances, a growth rate twice the average growth rate of Sub Saharan Africa, and higher

growth rates this year.

8. We have also made steady progress in our rankings on Doing Business, Corruption Perception and Democracy. In addition, earlier this year, I was the proud recipient of the peace prize awarded by the African Centre for the Constructive Resolution of Disputes (ACCORD) on behalf of the people of Sierra Leone. Only last month, our country received the Millennium Development Goal award for showing outstanding leadership in the fight against HIV/AIDs, malaria and other diseases.

9. Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members of Parliament, we must sustain these achievements. We must overcome the challenges that too often prevent us from completing our projects. When on assuming office I vowed to complete the Bumbuna Project, it was because I wanted to show that we as a people can do it. We can do it if we monitor implementation properly. We can do it if we mobilize resources. We can do it if we pay our dues to this country. And we can achieve much more if we dedicate ourselves to meeting our targets. When our partners see this determination; when they sense this resolute spirit, they would join us in completing our projects. We demonstrated it with the completion of Bumbuna; with the commencement of the Free Health Care Initiative; with the construction of roads and with the launch of the Smallholder Commercialization Programme.

10. Mr. Speaker, as a government of the people we have exercised our mandate to decide on a focused course of action. This is why the situation now is no longer a question of making choices; rather, it is a matter of implementing the projects we have rolled out. My government is dedicating the coming years to the successful implementation of these rolled out projects. We will intensify our efforts and build alliances for implementation. We will form stronger partnerships for completion of all projects.

11. Mr. Speaker, this country is ours to develop. Our friends and partners are supporting us, but the promise of success rests primarily with us. We must increase our contributions to national development for sustainability of the transformation. My government has already begun this process by increasing domestically funded capital spending from Le42.5 billion in 2007 to Le206.8 billion in 2010 as at the end of September. Government's contribution to road projects increased from Le16 billion in 2007 to over Le80 billion in 2010.

12. Sustaining this process requires vigorous mobilization of resources by all of us. We must pay our taxes; we must mobilize our expertise, strengthen our patriotism and reinforce our obligations to this country. Our development must rest on our own shoulders; our progress must be powered by our own contributions; we must not deviate from the priorities we have set. This requires tough discipline: we should allow nothing to distract us from concentrating on our priorities. We must cut down our expenditure on non priority areas and focus on the priority sectors of the Agenda for Change. We must continue to plug the leaks in our revenue collection systems; we must stop expenditure patterns that show no tangible results; we must continue to recover misappropriated public funds.

13. Mr. Speaker, five years from now, we would be evaluated in relation to our achievement of the MDGs. During the first years of the MDGs, our country was in the throes of conflict and emergency relief. Economic and social indicators were worse than pre-war levels. The country lost the necessary focus needed to put us on target for the MDGs. We must regain that focus by emphasizing the completion of our rolled out Agenda for Change projects. The choices we made in these priority sectors, from the Free Healthcare Initiative, the Small-holder Commercialization Programme, road infrastructure, sustainable energy and overhauling of the educational system, are aligned with the MDGs. Successful implementation of these projects will facilitate the achievement of these worthy development goals.

14. Mr. Speaker, next year we shall be commemorating the 50th anniversary of our freedom. But true freedom is the ability to achieve the goals we have set. We must complete the projects we have rolled out. We must be self-reliant. That is the most effective way of asserting our freedom.

15. Mr. Speaker, permit me now to report on the specifics of our programmes, and what is required to sustain the speedy implementation of these projects.

Energy and Water Resources

16. In the energy sector, we set out to achieve the supply of reliable power to Freetown, the completion of the Bumbuna Hydroelectric Project, the development of new power sources throughout the country and enhanced transmission and distribution networks. This is being implemented, and there is now a visible turnaround in the sector. We have increased electricity generation from an operational 5 megawatts in Freetown to over 60 megawatts. A new thermal plant is to be installed in Eastern Freetown. Generation at the Bo/Kenema Power Station is being expanded to provide affordable electricity to more communities. Expansion of the Dodo

hydroelectric plant is also on-going. This will massively improve power generation in the cities of Bo and Kenema. Makeni, Magburaka, Lunsar and Bumbuna Town will soon receive electricity from Bumbuna. Plans are already underway to increase the generating capacity of Bumbuna ten-fold through the construction of a second dam.

17. A programme for the electrification of provincial towns and cities is also now underway, covering Kabala, Makeni, Bonthe, Pujehun, Port Loko, Moyamba, Kambia, Lungi, Kailahun, Magburaka, and Koidu. With effective implementation and monitoring by all of us, these projects should be completed by the end of 2011.

18. We are also commencing construction of mini hydro-electric dams at Makali, Charlotte and Port Loko. With support from the European Union, intense technical activity is ongoing for the construction of a hydro electric facility in Moyamba. We are also planning to validate studies on our national hydro-electric potential to guide future interventions in the sector.

19. Solar energy lights are being provided to city streets and homes in rural communities, with homes already electrified in Mamusa, Blama Massaquoi, Kissy Koya, Makandeh and Mambioma. We are continuing to build on these achievements, and further work is already underway on a training centre for barefoot solar engineers, the first ever in Africa.

20. Mr. Speaker, in the water sector, we are improving the supply of potable water in Bo, Makeni and Kenema. We have also awarded contracts for the first phase of improved water supply to Kabala. Work on the rehabilitation of the water supply in Kailahun and Lungi will be completed in 2011. We have commenced work on the rehabilitation of the Degremont-built stations in Mile 91, Yonibana and Pujehun townships. Realizing that the Guma Valley Water Dam can only supply about 60% of the Freetown community, we are developing new water sources that will increase supply to communities along Circular Road and Parliament, Wellington, Calaba Town, IMATT and Hill Station. We are also actively seeking partnership for the development of the Orugu Dam.

Infrastructure

21. Mr. Speaker, we are transforming the national transportation network by designing and implementing the largest road construction plan in the history of Sierra Leone. Overseen by the Presidential Infrastructure Committee which I myself chair, roads are being constructed and

rehabilitated in every region and district of the country. New highways have already been completed between Masiaka and Bo, Bo and Kenema, and Makeni and Matotoka. Construction is ongoing on the highways between Freetown and Conakry, Kenema and Pendembu, Tokeh and Lumley and the Hillside Road from Pademba Road to Blackhall Road. Roads are being constructed in all provincial towns, with road construction in Bo, Kenema, Makeni and Magburaka to be completed next year. My Government has awarded contracts for roads in the townships of Port Loko and Kambia, and contracts are being designed and tendered for Koidu, Kailahun, Moyamba, Kabala, Bonthe and Pujehun. Further work on road construction is ongoing in the Freetown area.

22. Under the Priority Infrastructure Project supported by the European Commission, my Government will sign this October the agreement for the rehabilitation of the Bo-Bandajuma Highway, the Makeni-Kabala Highway, the widening of the seven bridges along the Masiaka-Bo Highway and the Freetown Urban Roads including Fourah Bay Road, Leicester Peak-Berry Street, the Lumley Beach Road and Sir Samuel Lewis Road. We have also received a no-objection from the ADB for the construction of the Lungi-Port Loko Road. Work on this road will commence this November.

23. My Government has developed a Feeder Road Policy to guide the design and implementation of feeder roads in the country. The construction of hundreds of kilometres of feeder roads in Bombali, Tonkolili, Kailahun and Kono that commenced in February 2008, has already been completed and work on feeder roads in Kambia, Port Loko, Kenema and Pujehun which commenced in September 2008, is over 70% complete.

24. Over 780 km of feeder roads all over the country are also being rehabilitated through the Rural and Private Sector Development Project and the Rehabilitation and Community-Based Poverty Reduction Project.

25. A further 1,305 km of feeder roads are being constructed in Port Loko, Kambia, Pujehun, Kenema, Bonthe, Kailahun, Kono, and Koinadugu through the Rural Roads Project, Infrastructural Development Project and the Multinational NERICA Dissemination Project (MNDP).

26. The procurement process for the rehabilitation of feeder roads under the Agricultural Sector

Rehabilitation Project is in its final stage. The project will commence by the end of 2010 and involves 410 km of feeder roads in Kenema, Pujehun, Moyamba, Port Loko and Kambia.

27. Mr. Speaker, my Government has also commenced the mass construction of jetties at Gbondapi in the Pujehun District; Gbangbatoke in the Moyamba District; Yargoi in the Bonthe District and Port Loko in Port Loko District. We have built jetties in Rokupr, Kassiri, Kychom and Mambolo in the Kambia District.

28. To improve safety at sea, the Government has secured and staffed a Search and Rescue boat. Navigation aids have also been installed in Sierra Leone's territorial waters and inland waterways to indicate danger spots, sand-banks, and direct ships coming into the country. Government has also purchased and installed ultra modern communication equipment in ten jetties in the country. Radio rooms have already been installed and attached to jetties in Shenge, Matru Jong, Rokupr and Tombo. Furthermore, the Government amended the Merchant Shipping Act which empowers the authorities to prosecute boat owners or operators who fail to provide life jackets for their passengers.

29. A new development in our infrastructural architecture is our concern for the comfort and effectiveness of our Members of Parliament. We have therefore started the construction of offices and conference facilities for their use which will be ready for commissioning by the end of the first quarter of 2011.

Agriculture

30. Mr. Speaker, Sierra Leone is typically an agrarian economy. Agriculture contributes 45% of our GDP, employs two thirds of the population and generates about a quarter of the export income of our country. However, the overwhelming majority of our farmers are poor, mainly because agriculture in this country is subsistence farming. We prioritize agriculture in our Agenda for Change because we want to stop this unacceptable state of affairs. We plan to make agriculture the engine for socio-economic growth and development by commercialising farming and promoting the private sector.

31. We have begun to successfully implement this vision. A National Sustainable Agricultural Development Programme (NSADP) to provide direction for the sector for up to 2030 was signed in 2009. The programme is consistent with the Comprehensive African Agriculture Development

Programme (CAADP), the framework of Heads of States and Governments of the African Union and international partners.

32. We have increased the budgetary allocation to the sector to nearly 10%, in line with Government's international commitments as part of the Maputo Declaration. Public investment in agriculture has quadrupled since 2007. Ten thousand farmers have been brought together in Farmer-Based Organisations through the Smallholder Commercialisation Programme and offered a package of subsidised inputs, machinery and training. One hundred and fifty agricultural business centres are being built around the country.

33. Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to announce to this honourable house that we have secured substantial international investment of over US\$100m. Much of this supports expansion of the Smallholder Commercialisation Programme to tens of thousands of farmers over a five year period. The investment will also support the rehabilitation of feeder roads and irrigation systems; improve access to rural finance and strengthen food security safety nets.

34. Since last year agriculture has been attracting large-scale private investment, including Addax Bio-energy promoting ethanol and electricity production through a sugar plantation in Bombali; and Gold Tree rehabilitating an oil palm plantation in Kailahun to create the country's largest plantation and processing facility.

35. We are continuing to build on these achievements, and work is ongoing on irrigation, increasing exports, overhauling research and improving bio-diversity.

Health

36. Mr. Speaker, health care provision in our country has been a challenge for years. User fees were primarily responsible for reduced access to services. Nearly 9 out of 10 people gave the payment of fees as the primary reason for their low utilisation of health services. Thus Sierra Leone's maternal and child health indicators were among the worst in the world. In the Agenda for Change, we set out a programme for accessible, affordable and quality health care for all Sierra Leoneans, especially the poor and vulnerable.

37. Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members, in accordance with this programme, my government launched the Free Health care Initiative for pregnant women, lactating mothers and children under five, in April this year. This has resulted in a massive increase in the utilisation of health services and has improved health care access for nearly half a million women and over a million children. The number of health facilities has been increased by around 30%. Maternity wards have been built in Kabala, Kono, Bo and Kenema. Five basic emergency obstetric and newborn care centres are being established in the Western Area and one centre will also be established in each of the other districts. A new regional referral hospital has been constructed in Bombali, three district hospitals have been rehabilitated in Moyamba, Kambia and Kono, and procurement processes to rehabilitate another 11 district hospitals have already been concluded. A central medical store and 13 district medical stores have also been constructed.

38. We have significantly improved the number, pay and training of health workers, with over 500 additional health workers trained in basic emergency obstetric care and in neonatal and childhood illness. A midwifery school has been established at Makeni, over a thousand additional technical health staff recruited, and salaries for health care workers significantly increased.

39. We would also be improving the diagnostic medical and surgical facilities at the PCMH, Ola During and Connaught hospitals with an \$18 million loan from the Kuwait Fund.

40. To improve the quality of health care services, we have developed a five-year strategic plan to deliver a basic package of essential health services in every district, including emergency obstetrics and new born care, preventive services such as immunization, integrated management of neonatal and childhood illness, and provision of insecticide treated bed-nets.

41. We are continuing to build on these achievements, and work is progressing to achieve the long-term goal of abolishing all user fees and replacing them with a national health insurance scheme. We have also already distributed nearly a million insecticide treated bed nets, and vaccinated a million children against polio in six rounds of National Immunization Days. Over 470 prevention of mother-to-child transmission centres and nearly 529 voluntary confidential and counselling centres have also been established for HIV/AIDS.

Education and Youths

42. Mr. Speaker, as stated in our National Anthem, our forefathers spread knowledge far and wide. Ours is a country with a proud history of excellence in education. But this great tradition is under serious threat. Many of our children are out of school, too few complete their schooling and fewer get quality education. In an age when education is the greatest resource a country should have, this is unacceptable.

43. We must reclaim our heritage of learning and excellence and transform this country through the quality of our education. That is why in the Agenda For Change, we set out to improve access to education, raise the completion rate, and improve the quality of education and teacher training.

44. We launched the Professor Gbamanja Commission of Inquiry to review the educational sector followed by a White Paper that accepts its recommendations for an overhaul of the education system. The implementation of the report has commenced at the University of Sierra Leone and the Njala University with the banning of access courses.

My Government is also establishing a Teacher Service Commission to ensure the effective management of the noble profession. Over 4000 additional teachers have been recruited, based on a new National Policy on Teacher Training and Development, and resources have been secured for the construction of more schools and technical vocational institutions. Grants-in-aid have been awarded to all female students who gained admission to tertiary institutions to study science courses such as mathematics, physics, chemistry and biology and engineering options, and for all disabled students who fulfilled admission requirements for tertiary institutions to pursue higher education. We are also paying tuition fees for all girls in approved government assisted junior secondary schools.

45. We are continuing to build on these achievements. We are continuing to conduct National School Verification Exercises to weed out 'ghost teachers'. We have formulated a National Policy on Technical, Vocational Education and Training, and completed the construction of 7 new technical vocational institutes in Kono, Kenema, Kailahun, Koinadugu, Bombali, Bo and Moyamba, and rehabilitated the Government Technical Institute at Magburaka.

46. We are implementing a \$9 million project with support from the Islamic Development Bank for the construction of additional Technical and Vocational Institutes throughout the

country. We have also revised the curriculum for technical and vocational institutes, bringing in new trades that are attractive to women. Furthermore we are supporting non-government run technical and vocational institutes with hundreds of millions of leones every quarter.

47. Mr. Speaker, youths are the mainstay of the country and the most energetic Sierra Leoneans. We cannot sustain our democracy and development without their active participation. That is why, for the first time in this country's history, we established the National Youth Commission to spearhead the active, disciplined and skilled involvement of youths in the development of this country. The members of the board of the commission have been appointed and the names of the Commissioner and Deputy Commissioner will soon be sent to this House for approval. A building for the commission has been identified and the commission will be fully operational before the close of this parliamentary session.

48. In addition to these efforts we are also receiving a \$20 million support from the World Bank focusing on skills development and employment of youth.

The Economy

49. Mr. Speaker, in relation to the economy, our aim was to simultaneously maintain macro-economic stability, increase revenues, improve international confidence in the management of the economy, promote investment and re-align government expenditure in favour of infrastructural development.

50. Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members, we have been largely successful in achieving our aim. In spite of the global economic downturn, our economy grew at double the average growth rate for Africa as a whole. IMF and our own figures indicate a rebound of economic activities and further growth this year.

51. We are increasing revenues by broadening the tax base through the introduction of the Goods and Sales Tax, and tackling tax evasion and avoidance through the introduction of the Automated System of Custom Data (ASYCUDA), and tax payer identification numbers. In the first half of 2010, GST collections amounted to Le98.5 billion, far in excess of the amount collected for the whole of 2009 from the previous seven taxes replaced by the GST. Our reforms in the tax collection system have enabled the Government to increase Sierra Leone's revenue collection effort to 11.7% of GDP in 2009 and it is expected to reach 13% this year.

52. Mr. Speaker, since we took over in 2007, we have increased spending on infrastructure and other capital projects from under Le180 billion to over Le450 billion on a new development agenda. This spending will soon increase to Le620 billion.

53. Mr. Speaker, we are also improving the coordination of international support and aid effectiveness through the adoption of a new Aid Policy. This policy has now become internationally recognised as a model for African aid effectiveness. My Government is currently coordinating the flow of aid and financial support in a well-structured and aligned manner. Using the comprehensive aid coordination approach, the Government ensured that UN agencies signed a joint vision to align their funding to the country's Agenda for Change. Joint strategies have also been respectively developed by the World Bank Group and the African Development Bank, and the UK and European Union.

54. Mr. Speaker, my Government is improving the confidence of international development partners in the country. In 2007, we inherited a difficult relationship with the International Monetary Fund (IMF). But due to the prudent and professional management of the economy, government successfully completed the sixth and final review of the country's performance and the IMF approved a three-year programme under the Extended Credit Facility. Sierra Leone's rating under the World Bank Country Policy and Institutional Assessment (CPIA) improved. The improved CPIA rating will unlock much needed development assistance to Sierra Leone.

55. My Government has had great success in persuading traditional development partners to maintain previous funding levels, a major achievement in this economic climate. This guarantee was provided by donors at the Consultative Group Meeting in London in November 2009. We have strengthened our country's relationship with international partners including the African Development Bank, DFID, EC, the World Bank, BADEA, The Kuwaiti Fund, the Islamic Development Bank, Abu Dhabi Fund, Saudi Fund and OPEC Fund for International Development (OFID). As a result of these strengthened partnerships, Official Development Assistance (ODA) to Sierra Leone has increased from US\$347 million in 2007 to US\$357 million in 2009.

56. Mr. Speaker, my Government is also working assiduously with development partners to eliminate the huge debt owed to external commercial creditors. The World Bank has approved the implementation of a second debt reduction facility for external commercial creditors.

Progress on this is now at an advanced stage. On implementation of the debt reduction programme, Sierra Leone's external debt stock which stood at US\$722 million at the end of June 2010 would be slashed by a third.

57. Furthermore, for the first time in the history of this country, the Government has developed a framework for the formulation of a comprehensive national debt law. This legislation sets out the framework for public sector borrowing at all levels of Government and provides a clear approach to effective public debt management practices.

58. My Government has also embarked upon a comprehensive range of measures to strengthen public financial management in both Central Government and Local Councils. We have launched the Integrated Public Financial Management Reform Programme (IPFMRP) in a bid to ensure sustainable improvement in our country's fiscal governance. We are also reviewing The Government Budgeting and Accountability Act (2005), Financial Management Regulations (2007), Public Procurement Act (2004) and Procurement Regulations (2006) to strengthen the legal framework for budgeting, accounting, recording and procurement.

59. Government is also rolling out the Integrated Financial Management Information System (IFMIS) in the Accountant General's Department as the bedrock for the transparent recording, reporting and accounting of all Government financial transactions.

60. As a demonstration of my Government's commitment to transparency and with the support of the Public Accounts Committee of Parliament, Standing Order 75 was clarified. This makes it possible for the Annual Public Accounts Report to be made public as soon as they are laid in Parliament. The backlog of Annual Public Accounts has been cleared and the most recent public accounts for 2009 have been published. The Auditor General's Report on 2008 public accounts has been completed on time.

61. Finally, the Government has also established a Performance Audit Unit in the Office of the Auditor General to go beyond traditional financial audit and appraise and measure the impact of public service delivery on citizens. The first performance audit has been conducted and report submitted to parliament.

The Financial Sector

62. Mr. Speaker, my Government is also supporting the development of the financial sector. Consistent with its mandate, the Bank of Sierra Leone continues to further the implementation of the Financial Sector Development Plan. The commercial banking sector is being deepened, with credit to the private sector expanded. The concerns raised by the general public on the proliferation of banks have been taken into account with Bank of Sierra Leone strengthening its supervisory and regulatory role and raising minimum capital of banks. In addition, modernization of the payments system is being pursued and the National Switch through which, all banks will interconnect their ATMs and other products is expected to go live by the end of 2010.

63. In order to further enhance the operational independence of the Bank of Sierra Leone, Government is currently reviewing the Bank of Sierra Leone Act 2000. Similarly, the Banking Act 2000 and the Other Financial Services Act 2001 are also being reviewed to ensure compliance with international standards.

Private Sector Development

64. Mr. Speaker, as I have stated from the very beginning of my Presidency, the development and growth of the private sector are vital to the broader development of Sierra Leone. This vision is being firmed up through the development of a National Private Sector Development Strategy and a National Export Strategy amongst others.

65. In implementing our strategy for the sector, we have placed great emphasis on the World Bank's Doing Business Reforms. As a result of these reforms, I am proud to announce that Sierra Leone has become one of the World's best reformers and has improved 20 places in the rankings over the last three years. Key reforms include a new Companies Act, enhanced shareholder protection and improved business registration procedures. Through our investor promotion efforts, Sierra Leone is now firmly on the map of world-class international investors who are actively considering significant investments across sectors. Addax's US\$400 million investment, coming off the back of the Trade and Investment Forum in London in November 2009, and widely acclaimed as one of the most impressive events of its type, sends a clear signal to the international business community that Sierra Leone is an attractive investment destination, and that large, lucrative transactions involving serious investors are possible.

66. In February 2010, my Government launched a Sugar and Oil Palm outreach campaign, which I am pleased to say, is yielding a fantastic level of interest from some of the world's largest and most reputable sugar and oil palm companies, including the likes of TSB, Illovo Sugar, Tate and Lyle, Wilmar and Musim Mas. In the extractive industries sector, Sierra Leone welcomes the interest being shown by the likes of Essar Group, Anadarko, Shandong Iron and Steel Group, and the Dangote Group. In the tourism sector, we welcome the interest of one of the world's most heralded and reputable hotel groups Hilton International, who will partner with IDEA Limited, an indigenous entity to redevelop the historic Cape Sierra into an international 4-star hotel.

67. In order to achieve our growth objectives, Government will collaborate extensively with the private sector and therefore we are setting up a Public Private Partnership Unit in the Office of the President. The Unit will assist MDAs in structuring and negotiating agreements. The Unit will also collaborate with the National Commission for Privatisation (NCP) who are at the final stages of negotiating the commissioning of the Freetown port to an international port operator. The NCP has also partially privatised Rokel Commercial Bank by a stock market listing and are poised to fully divest government's remaining shareholding.

The Public Service

68. Mr. Speaker, our public service has over the last decades faced enormous challenges that compromised its ability to deliver on its core mandate and improve service delivery. As an action-oriented government, we are adopting a holistic strategy to improve the capacity of the public service. Firstly, we all know that our public service is among the least paid workforce in the world. We intend to close that gap through comprehensive pay reform.

69. Secondly, I have created a leadership forum for senior officials to enhance collaboration, coordination and implementation of programmes. Thirdly, we are resuscitating the Civil Service College, which was closed down 36 years ago, to train cadres of public officials to meet the needs of today's changing environment. We have launched the construction of a twenty-first century Public Service Academy on more than two-hundred acres of land at Kent through a self-help project.

70. Mr. Speaker, when I launched the attitudinal change campaign three years ago, I was in effect preparing the minds of my compatriots for performance management across government. Having signed performance contracts with my ministers, every institution of government will

henceforth provide periodic performance reports, and the performance of every public servant shall be appraised. In addition, the performance of all public contractors and suppliers shall be subjected to unannounced checks, and defaulters brought to book.

Mineral Resources

71. Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members, all of us grew up knowing that our country is rich in mineral resources. However, these riches have not been translated into tangible benefits for our people. The country's mineral sector also lacked proper regulatory regimes, leading to non-transparent transactions, decrease in investor confidence and failure to attract large scale investments. My Government is determined to change this.

72. A starting point in the implementation of our goals for the sector was the review of all mining agreements. We have successfully completed the review of the Koidu Holdings Agreement and are currently renegotiating the Sierra Rutile and London Mining Company agreements. My Government is committed to reviewing all mining agreements without exception. We continue to seek support from our bilateral and multilateral friends for ongoing negotiations and for building capacity of the Ministry to monitor agreements and ensure compliance, and maximise the benefits from our mineral resources.

73. My Government also enacted a New Mines and Minerals Act in 2009 to guide its interventions in the sector. A new institutional framework with a stable, predictable, competitive, investor-friendly legal framework and fiscal environment has been established. We are encouraging the development of open and transparent mechanisms for marketing mineral products. Furthermore, my Government is diversifying the country's mineral economy by developing unexploited mineral resources, particularly in iron ore, gold and bauxite.

74. Our actions are bearing tangible dividends for this country. There has been an increase in Government revenue from new mining investment in exploration and development, and from current mining operations. Government has signed a mining lease agreement with the African Minerals Limited (AML) to start mining operations at Ferengbeya, Tonkolili District. The African Rail and Port Services (APRS) is constructing a standard gauge railway from Tonkolili to Lungi and a port at Targrin, which we expect to serve other mining concerns, and as a trans-shipment hub for the sub region. I am pleased to announce that I have already unveiled the first railway locomotive that arrived in the country in September 2010.

75. Over 300 million tonnes of proven bauxite reserves have been discovered and 146 million tonnes inferred in the Port Loko and Kambia Districts. Government has engaged the services of Terra Insight Services Incorporated to determine the variety and extent of our mineral deposit. This will allow government to own complete data on the country's mineral resources.

76. We are also implementing a new cadastre system and introducing the Gold Area Community Development Fund alongside the Diamond Area Community Development Fund to ensure greater benefits to communities from mining activities.

Petroleum

77. Mr. Speaker, the discovery by Anardako of hydrocarbon deposits in the Venus prospect last year made Sierra Leone's offshore oil potential attractive to investors. Anardako has reprocessed the 3D seismic data and recognized another Mercury Prospect which they are currently drilling with much confidence and hope for another successful discovery. This will be followed by an appraisal well for the Venus discovery, thus opening the way to possible development and production.

78. I have set up a Presidential Task Force and also requested international assistance for the review of our Petroleum Law and Fiscal Regime in order that Sierra Leone can derive maximum benefit from the new oil and gas resource and avoid the mistakes of other countries. The new petroleum bill will be tabled before this Honourable House for your approval.

79. The Petroleum Resources Unit has also delineated exploration blocks of about 2000sq km each, making available 8 new blocks offshore Sierra Leone for further exploration rights. With this delineation, Government will organise a tender process after due publication in the Sierra Leone Gazette. The Unit is also undertaking capacity building for efficient and effective service delivery. Currently, young Geology graduates of the University of Sierra Leone are joining the Unit to participate in the current drilling of Mercury Prospect by Anadarko Petroleum (SL). Training sessions are also being organized for public servants and other Sierra Leoneans in the areas of petroleum law, management, fiscal regimes, accounting and managing associated risks.

Fisheries and Marine Resources

80. Mr. Speaker, our fisheries and marine resources could yield more revenue for our people if properly regulated and managed. But for too long, revenues from our marine resources have been low; the sector was poorly regulated and our waters poorly protected from illegal fishing vessels.

81. To ensure clear guidance, goals and implementation strategies that are consistent with international best practice, my Government has developed a Fisheries Policy, new draft Fisheries Regulations and created clear functional units such as the Policy and Planning Unit; Monitoring, Control and Surveillance Unit; and the Commercial Fisheries Unit. Government has developed a national aquaculture strategy paper with a focus on sustainable commercialisation of aquaculture production systems.

82. The country has complied with international regulations by delinking the registration of vessels from the International Ship Registry in New Orleans. We have also banned pair trawling and the use of monofilament netting materials for fishing purposes as a robust conservation measure. This has led to an increase in fish stock levels. Revenue from the sector is also increasing.

Promoting Integrity in Public Life

83. Mr. Speaker, my Government has stepped up the fight against corruption. With prosecutorial powers granted it by the 2008 Anti Corruption Act, the Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) has ensured the highest rate of prosecution and conviction for corruption related offences in the country's history. The ACC has also recovered billions of Leones from persons convicted or investigated for corrupt practices. We have appointed a uniquely qualified lawyer, approved by this Honourable House to continue to vigorously promote integrity in public life and fight the cancer of corruption.

International Cooperation

84. Mr. Speaker, my Government's foreign policy is guided by our commitment to international peace and stability, enhancing the country's image, and ensuring international support for the government's Agenda for Change. We are successfully implementing this policy. As a result of sustained peace and tranquillity, and through persistent diplomatic engagement with the international community, we are pleased that at the recent United Nations General Assembly in New York, the Security Council unanimously approved the lifting of the last embargo on Sierra Leone.

85. In the Mano River Union sub region, Sierra Leone played a central role as member of the International Contact Group on Guinea in the negotiation with the junta to return the country to civilian rule. While remaining engaged with the Guinean authorities, we urge them to continue pursuing the democratic process and conclude elections without further delay.

86. At the level of ECOWAS, we have ratified a number of protocols on democratic governance; preventing conflict; and promoting trade. The country has also started issuing ECOWAS passports to its citizens. Recently, Sierra Leone allocated land for the construction of an ECOWAS troop logistics depot in Lungi.

87. As Chairman of the African Union Committee of Ten for the Reform of the Security Council, I have been leading negotiations on the issue of equitable global representation. The country also attended the Copenhagen Climate Change Conference in December 2009, arguing Africa's case with zeal and candour. Sierra Leone's growing influence in Africa is also evidenced by its hosting of the African Union Caucus of Finance Ministers and Central Bank Governors for the second year running in Freetown.

88. Sierra Leone is also contributing troops to Darfur, Sudan to help ensure stability in that part of the continent. This is proof to the world that our country is committed to bearing the burden of international cooperation in upholding security and development. The appointment of a Sierra Leonean as Sector Commander (South) in the African Union- United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur (UNAMID) is further testimony to the ability of our country to contribute to international peace and security.

89. We have maintained a strong bilateral relationship with the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and we continue to receive significant levels of support through DFID.

90. We appreciate the governments of the United States of America, Germany, Norway, Italy, India, Kuwait, Japan, and United Arab Emirates for their invaluable support to Sierra Leone. We also recognise the contributions of multilateral institutions – the United Nations family, the European Commission, the African Development Bank, the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, BADEA, and the Islamic Development Bank.

91. My Government is also expanding its bilateral relationships, reaching out to, and strengthening ties with, countries such as Brazil, India, Venezuela, South Africa, Kuwait and other Middle Eastern countries.

92. The country's international engagements have brought significant support towards the Government's development agenda. The United States Peace Corps Program has been resuscitated and volunteers sent to teach in schools all over the country. The Cuban government has also provided thirty two Medical Doctors with support from South Africa. Brazil has offered a training package for twenty five Sierra Leoneans in water irrigation, fish preservation and HIV/AIDS and the Venezuelan Government to award a total of thirty scholarships, fifteen for medical students and fifteen in other disciplines.

93. We have also strengthened links with China. A significant outcome of this is the establishment of the China-Sierra Leone Malaria Prevention and Treatment Centre. China is also currently supporting construction of a one hundred bed hospital in Freetown. There is also an agreement with the Chinese to support three hydro-electric projects in Charlotte, Bankasoka and Makali. Also underway, are the construction of the new Ministry of Foreign Affairs Building at Tower Hill as well as the Regent-Jui Road.

94. Within Africa, Nigeria has accelerated the Technical Aid Corps Programme, which has seen medical practitioners from that country posted here to compliment government's free health care delivery initiatives for vulnerable groups including under-fives, pregnant and lactating women.

95. Our relations with the Great Socialist Peoples Libyan Arab Jamahiriya continue to improve and we look forward to greater cooperation in areas of mutual interest.

96. Mr. Speaker, proactive diplomacy is the new approach. The days of armchair diplomacy are over, and the dawn of strategic, economic and responsive diplomacy is here. We are realigning diplomacy so that our diplomatic missions would be more effective in supporting our development agenda. That is why we intend to establish a closed foreign service to which the most qualified and competent public servants will be directly recruited.

Information and Communication

97. Mr. Speaker, my Government is transforming the information and communication sector. We have enacted the legislation and ensured the transformation of the Sierra Leone Broadcasting Service into an independent broadcaster, the Sierra Leone Broadcasting Corporation. My Cabinet has approved the Freedom of Information Bill. On enactment by Parliament in the coming parliamentary session, citizens' access to information from public officials will be revolutionized.

98. We have also designed a National ICT Policy, the first of its kind in this country and are setting up of a National ICT Advisory Council. We are in collaboration with the Commonwealth preparing an agreement to develop Information and Communications Technology (ICT) services in the rural areas.

99. Mr. Speaker, I am also pleased to announce to this Honourable House that my government has signed an MOU with Africa Coast to Europe (ACE) consortium, to land a submarine fibre optic cable in the country. This will revolutionize telecommunications in our country.

100. Through the Open Government Initiative, we have continued to bring ordinary people and government officials together, and provide ordinary people the opportunity to express their concerns and directly enquire about government policies and actions. Several such forums involving members of the Executive, the Judiciary, Parliament and Local Councils have been organized all over the country. In the first of its kind, in June 2010, ordinary people were brought from every region of our nation to express their concerns and pose questions directly to me, and the heads of the two other arms of government, the Speaker and the Chief Justice. We have also taken the initiative to the diaspora, holding a successful meeting in New York last month with Sierra Leoneans from all over the United States.

Internal Affairs

101. Mr. Speaker, my Government has successfully filled 37 out of the 40 vacant paramount chieftaincies and 84 town and village heads through free and fair elections conducted by NEC. We have also put in place modalities for enhancing national pride by replacing colonial Paramount Chief staffs and regalia bearing British Coat of Arms with new staffs and regalia bearing the Sierra Leone Coat of Arms. Furthermore, we have commenced training of chiefdom police and the preparation of a chiefdom police code of conduct.

102. Modernization and restructuring of the National Registration Secretariat has commenced in earnest. A new state-of-the-art technology which enhances national security by capturing biometric data is being used in the production of the National Identity Cards. By the end of 2011, every Sierra Leonean should have a national identity card.

103. Mr. Speaker, my Government has approved the restructuring of the Prisons Services. A draft Bill will soon be laid before Parliament for debate and enactment. Various detention centres including the Mafanta Prisons have been rehabilitated and refurbished to expand their facilities; this is enabling the department to address the challenges of overcrowding. Drastic reduction in prisoners' death roll has been recorded in the past three years. Frequent visits to prisons by non-state actors such as human right organizations are being encouraged, ensuring that welfare and human rights requirements are met.

104. The Immigration Department is also being restructured to meet the challenges of modern management trends and international standards. State-of-the-art equipment is now used for the issuance of machine readable passports that ensure maximum security of our passports and a credible database. The immigration services have been taken to the people by the setting up of regional offices in the East, North and South for improved service delivery and access to the facility. Cross border posts have been restored and are functioning in key areas such as Jendema in the Pujehun District and Gbalamuya in the Kambia District. Personnel are trained in contemporary skills to address issues of illegal immigrants, fraudulent documentations and cross border problems. Delays in the issuance of passports and other relevant documents have been reduced. An active Public Relations Unit and Customer Service Units have been established to ensure the Department's response to customer needs. Border Patrol Officers and Immigration Assistants have been recruited and are being trained with support from partners.

Decentralisation

105. Mr. Speaker, my Government has ensured an unprecedented increase, and predictable flow of funds to local councils. This has ensured a phenomenal degree of success in project implementation by the councils. Between 2008 and 2009, my Government transferred Le28.1 billion to local councils for their development projects. In 2010 with support from our development partners we have committed Le23.8 billion for the implementation of 62 service delivery projects by the 19 local councils nationwide.

106. In 2008, total grants to local councils for devolved services amounted to Le35.2 billion. This rose by Le21.1 billion to Le56.3 billion in 2009. Grants to local councils for devolved services will increase by 25% to Le70.4 billion in 2010.

107. We have also accelerated the devolution process through the setting up of a National Task Force on Devolution, ensured the recruitment of at least ten professional staff in each council, and established a Capacity Development Fund to provide an opportunity for Councils to finance their annual capacity development plans.

108. My Government has also ensured extensive training support to local councils and the establishment of a stable and transparent inter-governmental fiscal transfer system towards accelerating the delivery of critical services to rural communities.

109. We have also introduced the Decentralized Service Delivery Programme (DSDP). DSDP supports decentralized delivery of selected basic services. The first phase of this programme commenced in February, 2010 with US\$ 20 million support from the World Bank.

Security

110. Mr. Speaker, The Sierra Leone Police Force is engaged in intensive reforms in the areas of Change Management and Training, Crime Management, Operations and Support Services. Police Officers are being trained and deployed in Peacekeeping operations in other countries with laudable feedbacks. A Trans-National Organized Crime Unit has been established to arrest Drug Traffickers and 419ers. This has considerably reduced the statistics on drug trafficking, 419 fraud and armed robbery cases. Violence in sports amongst students has been considerably reduced, and The Community Volunteer Scheme has enhanced joint patrols amongst youths and police officers. A new Traffic Management Strategy for Improved Road Safety has also been developed.

111. Mr. Speaker, as with the Sierra Leone Police Force, my Government is fully capacitating the RSLAF to participate in international peacekeeping operations. As a result, our soldiers are now respected members of peacekeeping operations in Darfur, Sudan.

112. We have also increased the morale of our armed forces by restoring the supply of our staple food to our military which had been stopped 13 years ago. My Government has also improved financial accountability within the armed forces by instituting payment of salaries through the banks for soldiers.

113. We are also developing the physical infrastructure of the armed forces, constructing and rehabilitating their mosques and churches, canteens and mess, senior officers quarters, and hundreds of prefabricated housing units.

114. My Government also rehabilitated the former Recruit Billets at the Armed Forces Training Centre which is now used as accommodation for Sector Reconnaissance Company 2 going on Peace Support Operations in Darfur. Government has also rehabilitated the Military Hospital, and placed it under effective management.

115. We are also building the capacity of the RSLAF to effectively contribute to the socio-economic transformation of the country. The RSLAF has established agricultural units in Moyamba in the South and Tonkolili in the North. For the first time, Government has established an RSLAF Industrial Tailoring Complex to ensure cost effective production of RSLAF uniforms.

116. Mr. Speaker, let me also announce to this Honourable House that for the first time in the nation's history, the RSLAF is now training foreign cadet officers. In September 2010, 9 Liberians and 30 Sierra Leonean cadets trained by the RSLAF were commissioned at the Armed Forces Training Centre, Benguema.

Social Protection, Gender and Children

117. Mr. Speaker, following a nationwide consultation with key players, my Government launched a National Strategic Plan for the coordination, implementation and monitoring of comprehensive gender programmes in the country. We have set up Sexual and Gender-Based Violence (SGBV) Committees around the country. These committees are dedicated to ensuring that people conduct themselves within the legal framework of the three Gender Acts: the Domestic Violence Act, the Devolution of Estate Act, and the Customary Marriage and Divorce Act as well as the Child Rights Act.

118. We have developed an operational guideline for the formation of Child Welfare Committee (CWC), a frontline unit within the provision of the Child Rights Act for preventing and responding to issues of child abuse, neglect, exploitation and violence against children. Seventy such committees have been formed across the country.

119. My Government in partnership with UNICEF also developed a referral protocol for children and two pilot safe homes constructed in Freetown and in Makeni to address health, psycho-social, security and legal needs of victims or survivors. Along with partners, government has undertaken the mapping of SGBV service providers across the country to monitor and ascertain their effectiveness.

120. A task force against human trafficking is also operational, identifying victims, providing temporary shelter and uniting them with their families. Trafficking offenders are being prosecuted and a number of convictions secured. Government has also placed a moratorium on adoption, and constituted a Committee to review the 1989 Adoption Act.

121. My Government is also showing commitment to international instruments on gender and children rights. The Government has also produced the sixth CEDAW (Convention on the Elimination of all Discrimination against Women) report, ratified the UN Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities and commissioned an action plan for the implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 1325 and 1820 that focus on the prevention and protection of women from sexual violence especially in conflict and post-conflict periods.

The Justice Sector

122. Mr. Speaker, my government is supporting the justice sector to embark on various restructuring and judicial reform programmes. New Courts have been constructed at Masiaka, Mile 91 and York; and for the first time in 100 years, Government has built two new courts in the Western Area. We have also set up Backlog Courts in Freetown and throughout the provinces to clear some of the backlog cases. The Rehabilitation of the Mafanta Prisons in Tonkolili District is almost complete and by December 2010 we will be moving the first set of medium term prisoners there. The Criminal Procedure Act is also being revised and new proposals within the new act will include alternative sentencing and other mechanisms which will serve to speed up the time that cases currently spend in the Courts System. All of these interventions are in a bid to decongest the various prisons across the country, especially the Freetown Central Prisons commonly called Pademba Road Prisons.

123. A Fast Track Commercial Court (FTCC) is being established, and will commence operation in December 2010. To improve access to justice, itinerant courts have been developed for the East, South and the North. These itinerant courts will cover new areas such as Zimmi, Mongere, Bumbuna, Batkanu and Kamakwie. Over the past few months, over one hundred and fifty Police Prosecutors across the country have been trained and they will continue to be provided with training to improve their efficiency and effectiveness.

124. Furthermore, we have introduced a new bail policy, designed to clarify bail procedures and prevent abuses. We are poised to embark on massive sensitization on the provisions of this policy to ensure that citizens are made aware of what their rights are when faced with a bailable situation. The Pilot legal aid scheme that my Government commenced earlier this year has made tremendous gains. In the first six weeks, the team opened 405 cases and secured the discharge of 112 for lack of prosecution and the release of 27 juveniles in that period. As at the end of August 2010, a total of 1,020 cases had been processed of which 506 had been discharged. This is a clear manifestation of my Government's dedication to the provision of legal assistance for the poor and the vulnerable.

125. Mr. Speaker, in providing access to justice for the poor and vulnerable in society, my Government does realise that the majority of Sierra Leoneans access justice outside of the strictly formal system. With this in mind, the newly revised Local Courts Bill will be tabled before this noble House by my Attorney-General and Minister of Justice in the shortest possible time. This new Act seeks to place the Local Courts firmly under the auspices of the Chief Justice as stipulated by our Constitution and it will ensure that all appointments of officials to these Courts be done in a transparent manner at the District level with the involvement of all key stakeholders.

126. After over forty years, we have started training of Chiefdom Police Officials. In Moyamba District, these officials received intensive training on how to perform their duties and were given new uniforms and equipment. Over the next three months, the training and the provision of equipment will be rolled out to other Districts across the country. This will enable the Chiefdom Police Force to support the provision of justice services to people in the smallest villages.

Conclusion

127. Mr. Speaker, we have set out our priorities in the Agenda for Change and rolled out our

programmes based on these priorities. All over the country, transformative work is progressing. This momentum must be sustained; the work at hand must be completed; we must continue to demonstrate to our people, our international partners and the whole world that ours is a country that is truly achieving its aspirations.

128. To successfully do this, we must mobilize our own resources; we must pay our taxes; we must give back this country its dues; there is no way this country can take care of us if we do not pay for what it needs to do so.

129. Mr. Speaker, for too long people in leadership positions have paid more attention to consuming rather than to producing; for too long too many people have sat in corners grumbling rather than seizing the available opportunities; for too long too many Sierra Leoneans have taken the easier path of talking hard rather than working hard. For too long too many people have been passively intending great achievements for this country rather than actively working to uplift the fortunes of our nation. We must now step out of intentions and move unto actions; we must now be evaluated by the quality of our production and not the largeness of our consumption; we must stop grumbling and start seizing the opportunities that are opening up around us.

130. We are opening more vocational centres, learn a trade; we are improving the business environment, come together and form viable enterprises; we are increasing employment opportunities, go for the jobs through resilience, discipline and fortitude; we are commercializing agriculture, go for it by forming agricultural enterprises and organizing farmers; we are constructing roads all over the country, improving electricity and growing our economy, seize the opportunity.

131. But more than that, let us build alliances to sustain and enlarge these opportunities. Let us build partnerships for the effective implementation of the programmes we have rolled out. I am dedicating the coming years to completion in record time of our projects. I have appointed a Chief of Staff in my office to scale up the implementation of our rolled out programmes; I have established a forum of Permanent Secretaries to support the implementation of our projects. Let this Honourable House join us in a structured and effective alliance for implementing the programmes. Let the Council of Paramount Chiefs join us in this endeavour; let umbrella civil society organizations, SLANGO, SLAJ, newspapers, radio stations, women and youth organizations come into partnership with government to complete the implementation of our rolled out programmes.

132. Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members of Parliament, God has blessed us with immense resources. Let us now work harder to claim this great inheritance. The fertility of our soil would do us no good if we do not work hard on it with the tractors and other inputs that are being provided; our produce would not fetch great prices if we do not add value unto them; our minerals are nothing if we do not transform them into revenues for the Government and people of Sierra Leone; and our expenditures would not have the desired impact if they are not focused on the transformative projects in our Agenda. And our projects would not transform lives if they are not completed.

133. We have reviewed all the proposals that we set ourselves to implement. We have determined the various stages of implementation. We have identified the obstacles affecting their completion and have developed blueprints for getting over those obstacles and for accelerating implementation. Let us get down to the worksites. This is not the time for projects in office shelves. Let these projects become deeds on the ground that the overwhelming number of our people could count as achievements. That has been the commitment of my Government: the common man and woman must see the achievements; they must be the main beneficiaries of our efforts. From the Free Healthcare Initiative, to the provision of energy, the construction of roads, and the increases in agricultural productivity, the ordinary man and woman must reap the dividend of our democracy.

134. Let those of us who are in leadership positions inspire the nation to work harder by the productivity of our efforts. Let us inspire the ordinary man and woman unto increasing their productivity by the example of our own industrious actions.

135 Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members of Parliament, the commemoration of our fiftieth anniversary of Independence next year must be inspired by our passion for implementation, hard work and mobilization of our own resources. This is why I am declaring the 50th year of our Independence as the Year of Implementation. Only dedicated implementation can sustain our achievements; only that can inspire hope in the ordinary man and woman; only service to this land that we love can make us reclaim the promise of greatness bequeathed unto us nearly 50 years ago.

136. God Bless Sierra Leone

137. I thank you for your attention.