



AU DRIVE, TOWER HILL, FREETOWN

PRESIDENTIAL ADDRESS

(HANSARD)

OFFICIAL HANSARD REPORT

FIFTH SESSION - FIRST MEETING

THURSDAY, 15TH DECEMBER, 2016

SESSION – 2016/2017



OAU DRIVE, TOWER HILL, FREETOWN

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First Meeting of the Fifth Session of the Fourth Parliament
of the Second Republic of Sierra Leone.

Proceedings of the Sitting of the House
Held on Thursday, 15th December, 2016.

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THE CHAMBER OF PARLIAMENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF SIERRA LEONE

Official Hansard Report of the Proceedings of the House

**FIFTH SESSION – FIRST MEETING
OF THE FOURTH PARLIAMENT
OF THE SECOND REPUBLIC**

Thursday, 15th December, 2016.

The House met at 11:15 a.m. in Parliament Building, Tower Hill, Freetown.

PRAYERS

[The Muslim and Christian Religious Leaders read the Prayers].

[His Excellency the President, Dr Ernest Bai Koroma, in the Chair].

The House was called to order

**PROCLAMATION – SECTION 84[1] OF THE CONSTITUTION OF SIERRA LEONE
[ACT NO.6 OF 1991]**

HON. IBRAHIM SULAIMAN SESAY [*Clerk of Parliament*]: In exercise of the powers conferred upon him by subsection [1] of Section 84 of the Constitution, the President hereby makes the following Proclamation:

Now, therefore, I do hereby proclaim that the Fifth Session of the Fourth Parliament of the Second Republic shall be held at Parliament Building, Tower Hill, commencing on Thursday, the 15th day of December, 2016, at 10:O'clock in the forenoon.

THE PRESIDENTIAL ADDRESS

DR ERNEST BAI KOROMA [*President of the Republic of Sierra Leone*]:

Mr Speaker,

Mr Vice President,

My Lord the Chief Justice,

Ministers of Government,

Honourable Members of Parliament,

Excellences, Members of the Diplomatic Corps,

His Worship the Mayor of Freetown,

Distinguished Guests,

Ladies and Gentlemen'

On becoming President in 2007, I vowed to move this country forward, to transform its roads, improve electricity, invest more in education and health, and improve Sierra Leone's reputation as a peace-loving, democratic and resilient nation. Our actions brought about the biggest investment flows into the country since independence, with the opening up of huge iron ore mines, and large agricultural projects in the country. We faced challenges, but we acted on our promises, and in every district today, our achievements are very visible. Because of our actions, all projections, from reputable agencies all over the world, pointed to great times ahead for Sierra Leone.

Then Ebola struck; then iron ore prices fell. The projections did not foresee these events coming. Nobody in 2013 saw these events coming. Today, mainly because of those two shocks, the going is tough, but we should not pull back from our aspirations to move this country forward.

We know there are some who questioned the actions we took before Ebola struck and iron ore prices fell. But my honourable friends would agree with me that the country needed massive investments in roads, and we did that; that the country needed free health care for pregnant women and for children and we did that; that the country needed to triple salaries of teachers, lecturers, nurses, doctors and civil servants, and we did that; that our country needed to pay for its students to sit to public examinations and we did that; that our country needed to get women into the sciences in tertiary institutions and we did that; that our country needed to improve its electricity and we did that; that our country needed to put more resources into agriculture and other priority sectors, and we took action on all these fronts.

We know that there were many challenges in meeting all the targets we set forth for those programmes. But we are encouraged by the positive outcomes deriving from our action. Just last week, the International Monetary Fund, in their conclusion of the sixth and final review of the Extended Credit Facility [ECF], commended our strong actions and economic policies. My government's economic reform programme supported by the ECF has achieved its key objectives and we have ensured stronger and more inclusive growth despite the exogenous shocks of the Ebola epidemic and the collapse of iron ore prices. This acknowledgement by the international world is a testament to our tough decisions, our resilience and our prudent fiscal and economic reforms.

We will continue to fight to overcome the other challenges. We are not afraid to get into the ring and do what is necessary. We applaud the armchair patriots and internet nationalists who criticize us. They may mean well for this nation, but we also implore them to come into the ring for the heavy lifting, to come into the ring to start businesses, to contribute your education to our schools, your expertise to our youths, and your global experience to the advancement of the nation.

I hear people say the country is not ready for them. But no country is ready for its people until its people are ready for it. I was ready for my country, so I jumped into the ring to contribute, and against great odds I have been able to push this country in the direction of transforming its roads, of investing more in health and education, of

improving energy and enhancing our country's standing in international forums. Come to the ring, don't wait until challenges mount and you start saying how patriotic and wise you are because you never joined in the battle.

Every country has moments in which it is tested. We were moving up and flying high before Ebola struck and iron ore prices fell. But inspired by the immortal words of our national anthem, I stand before you with a zeal that never tires. And together, we will succeed; this country has done it before, and I have no doubt that with your support and the determination of our people, we will do it again.

Mr Speaker Honourable Members, already our economy is recovering with a projected growth of 4.9% in 2016 from a contraction of 21% in 2015. Real GDP is projected to grow by 5.4% in 2017, steadily increasing to 6.1% in 2019. This growth will be driven mainly by the expected increases in iron ore production, as well as by increased public and private investments in agriculture, fisheries, tourism, construction, manufacturing and energy.

Yes, times are challenging, but we are tightening our belts, and we will not relent in moving forward with transformative infrastructural development programmes. In the east end of Freetown, we are constructing a four-lane road from Wellington to Masiaka and expanding the ports. We are also constructing the township roads of Waterloo, building a teaching hospital at Kerry Town and a Centre for Tropical Disease Control that would serve not only our country but also the sub region.

This is because my Government has continued to break new grounds in consolidating our position as a destination for mining investment in the world. Shansteel Ltd., which took over the Tonkolili mines from African Minerals, has resumed operations, and is targeting a staggered expansion to increase production to pre-Ebola figures. This means that we have been able to save significant numbers of jobs for Sierra Leoneans, as well as increase opportunities for Sierra Leonean businesses. Also, Koidu Holdings Ltd., which is engaged in large-scale Kimberlite diamond mining in Sierra Leone, has commenced work to transition to underground mining, becoming the first large-scale underground mining operation in the country. Sierra Rutile Ltd, which has been

acquired by Iluka Resources, now operates the Rutile Mines in Moyamba and Bonthe. Iluka is also committed to preserving employment benefits that Sierra Rutile's operations provide to surrounding local communities and Sierra Leone. My Government has also received expressions of interest from reputable investors to develop new large-scale diamond mines in the country.

Exports will therefore recover strongly in 2017 and 2018. The resulting increase in export earnings, complemented by prudent fiscal and proactive monetary policies, will help to stabilise the exchange rate and contain inflationary pressures. The National Revenue Authority [NRA] has made tremendous efforts in improving its domestic revenue collection. We will continue to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of the NRA to enable them to increase domestic revenue collection to 20% of GDP.

My Government is also implementing more belt-tightening fiscal and proactive monetary policies in the short-term as well as medium-term sectoral policies in agriculture, fisheries, mining and manufacturing. This is why, despite the challenges posed by the twin shocks, Government's performance has been remarkable under the economic and financial programme supported by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) through the Extended Credit Facility.

Mr Speaker, we are on the way to recovery and growth. We are acting with great urgency to achieve the goals set forth in our Presidential Recovery Priorities. Permit me now Mr Speaker, to inform this Honourable House, our citizens and friends of our dear country, on the specifics of our actions on these priority areas and other key sectors.

Health

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, in my last address to this Honourable House, I committed my Government to maintain a zero Ebola infection rate and to strengthen our health care delivery system. With your partnership and the dedication of our gallant healthcare workers, we have been able to achieve these goals.

In recognition of their exemplary service in the fight against Ebola, my Government has absorbed into the payroll 500 nurses who volunteered their services during the response. Whilst no amount of compensation will make up for the irreparable loss to

their families and the nation, my Government has begun the process of paying death benefits to the next of kin of the deceased health workers. To date, payments have been made in respect of 103 deceased health workers. We have also extended the Free Health Care Initiative to our Ebola Virus survivors and a comprehensive package catering for their special healthcare needs has been provided.

Mr Speaker, learning from the EVD outbreak, my Government is taking action to build a resilient health system that is well positioned to prevent, detect, and respond to any public health threat of either the same or of similar nature to Ebola. We have established two public health laboratories in the Western Area and one in each of the regional headquarter towns of Bo, Kenema and Makeni. These laboratories have full capabilities to test for viral haemorrhagic fevers including Ebola. One of these, in the Western Area, is fully equipped to test for the Zika virus.

An Emergency Operational Centre and a National Public Health Agency for capacity building have been established at Cockerill to coordinate field activities during outbreaks.

My Government has taken concrete steps to deal with the shortage of medical practitioners. Forty-three medical doctors, two radiographers and four laboratory scientists, from various African countries have been contracted, several of whom are already in-country for immediate deployment to district hospitals nationwide. Additionally, we have undertaken to sponsor more than 30 locally trained young doctors to pursue specialist courses in various fields.

At the same time, middle grade Community Health Officers are being trained in life-saving medical and surgical interventions to act as Physician Assistants where there are either no doctors or they are in short supply. A second paramedical school has also been opened in Makeni to complement the existing one in Bo that has served this country so well. These interventions will no doubt improve the doctor to patient ratio as well as translate to better health outcomes for our people.

Mr Speaker, please permit me to commend both sides of this Honourable House for enacting the Teaching Hospital Complex Act and the Postgraduate Council of Health Specialties Act. With that bi-partisan support, we have paved the way for a revolution in medical education in this country. Preparations are underway for the construction of a five-hundred bed dedicated Teaching Hospital at Kerry Town. In order to address the space limitations in our hospitals nationwide and in the Western Area in particular, I have also commissioned, at Waterloo, Lumley, and Mountain Cut, the construction of three additional hospitals, each with a bed capacity of close to 100.

Mr Speaker, we are at an advanced stage in the establishment of a cost-free National Ambulance Service which will prioritize highly vulnerable groups. The National Ambulance Service will also create employment for hundreds of volunteer nurses and for youths who will serve as drivers.

My Government has further supported the establishment of a tracking system, the Maternal Deaths Surveillance and Response System, to investigate all maternal deaths, and take the necessary actions. We have also installed 100 solar powered refrigerators to store vaccines and other medicines in hard-to-reach communities. We will continue the fight against HIV/AIDS, Tuberculosis, and Malaria alongside our accelerated efforts to reduce teenage pregnancy and eliminate childhood malnutrition. With strong support from our health development partners, medical services for all of these conditions in all public facilities continue to be free of cost.

Social Protection

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, the lingering economic impacts of the Ebola outbreak and the sharp fall of commodity prices are more pronounced among our less privileged compatriots. This is why as part of our recovery programme, and with support from our development partners, my Government has continued to provide assistance to 47,000 extremely poor and vulnerable households with unconditional cash transfers. A total number of 11,600 youths in extremely poor and vulnerable households have received conditional cash transfers through Labour Intensive Public Works. We are also scaling up our efforts to ensure continuous care for EVD-affected persons and

survivors. Under my Government's Recovery Priorities, the Ministry of Social Welfare, Gender and Children's Affairs is providing livelihood support through stipend payments, financial literacy training and cash support under the Social Rehabilitation and Payments to Ebola Survivors [SRPES] project.

Education

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, my government has taken action to improve the quality of instruction in schools by developing new content in the core subjects; and we are piloting an incentive scheme in 1,200 primary and 150 junior secondary schools in Kambia, Tonkolili, Pujehun and Kenema districts. The scheme will provide financial reward to schools based on how well they are managed and maintained as well as how much learning and improvement takes place over time. This scheme will take advantage of the annual schools examinations analyses and new policy measures we have commenced this year. From now on, every school and district will be rated and ranked in terms of performance in the primary, junior and senior secondary school levels.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I am pleased to report to you that in spite of the challenges, my government has launched the national school feeding programme. This is a big win for our people and we will sustain it as one of the biggest social transformation programmes in the country. It is already bringing broad smiles unto the faces of our primary school kids; teachers all over the country are reporting increases in the number of children going to school and staying for classes; it is creating big markets for local produce in communities all over the country, bringing added income to farmers, market women, and transporters. The programme is also activating a new spirit of volunteerism in local communities, as women take turns to cook meals for their children in schools; get more involved in school affairs and push to sustain greater nutrition, enrolment and retention of school children all over the country.

Mr Speaker, the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology has established a 'Situation Room' which receives information from 1,192 community monitors to ascertain quality assurance in our schools. To address the problem of overcrowding in

classrooms, an initial 225 new classrooms out of an overall target of 500 are being constructed across the country, with support from UK Aid. Because of the actions we continue to take in the education sector, more pupils are progressing to and passing public examinations. In 2016, over 115,000 pupils took the NPSE, with nearly 87,000 passes. The numbers contrast positively with the passes in 2015. At the basic examination level, performance in the core subjects in 2016 was much higher than in 2015.

The rehabilitation of sub-sahara's oldest university, Fourah Bay College, has commenced and with this, we will ensure that it regains its pre-eminent position in Africa.

Agriculture

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, the agriculture sector remains the largest employer, providing employment for 60-65% of our workforce, and contributing 54% of GDP.

Our objective under the recovery programme is to create 10,000 jobs across the agriculture supply chain, and increase agricultural production and productivity of targeted crops and livestock. To this end, the Ministry has distributed 65,000 bushels of seed rice; 42,000 bags of assorted fertilizers and millions of different varieties of tree crops seedlings to individual farmers and farming groups. Fifty-two Agricultural Business Centres have been selected for transformation into viable processing and marketing entities.

At the same time, a total of 922.5 km of feeder roads are being rehabilitated in nine districts and work is at an advanced stage in the Kailahun, Kenema, Kono and Koinadugu Districts. We have also provided 2,292 farm families with access to finance.

Fisheries

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, the Fisheries and Marine Resources Sector has made major gains over the past years both in terms of increasing fish supplies to the local markets and revenue generation from about Le 40.3 billion in 2015 to over Le 47.3 billion up to October, 2016. The Ministry's capacity to combat Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated [IUU] fishing has been scaled up.

The Ministry continues to monitor all licensed fishing vessels through a 24 hour Vessel Monitoring System [VMS] and an Automatic Identification System [AIS]. We have further enhanced the capacity of our local communities with inshore fibre glass boats for community surveillance of our marine protected areas. We are also utilizing the 'Blue Traker' software to identify and arrest fishing vessels for infractions in our waters. With our partners, we are developing a regional fishery information dashboard at the ministry. This will enable the exchange of information on fishery statistics and illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing activities in the sub-region.

Private Sector Development

Mr Speaker, the private sector remains central not only to our economic recovery, but also in ensuring sustainable economic growth. In this respect, my Government is supporting 1,000 Medium and Small Scale Enterprises [SMEs] to increase their competitiveness across key value chains. Several SMEs have received substantial business development support, linking them to affordable and customized financing. To further improve the business environment, we have completed the digital re-registration of 869 companies in the Corporate Affairs Commission database, making them available online. With support from the United Kingdom, we have acted to improve access to commercial justice, including some decentralized case processing to increase access in the districts. These efforts are paying off as shown by improvements in the 'Starting a Business' indicator recorded in the latest World Bank Doing Business report.

We are also improving the efficiency and effectiveness of the Freetown Port. An updated and streamlined clearance process mapping is being completed while a public outreach strategy to clarify port operations and increase accountability is underway.

Informed by our Local Content legislation, we are ensuring an initial 10% local sourcing in institutional feeding contracts. This is in addition to an initial 10% sourcing of local rice for the Sierra Leone Police, Correctional Services and the Ministry of Defence.

Water and Environmental Protection

Mr Speaker, three bills designed to unlock the potential of the sector in water resources management and service delivery by utilities have received preliminary clearance from

the Parliamentary Sub-Committee on Water. They are now awaiting final legislative review and clearance by members of this Honourable House.

Looking ahead, my Government is laying the foundation for a permanent solution to the water sector issues in Freetown. Already, various Terms of Reference have been developed and are awaiting advanced contracting clearance from the African Development Bank to kick-off the relevant feasibility studies.

My Government has taken further action to provide safe water supply to 700,000 people in several provincial areas, and improve access to water and sanitation in Pujehun, Kono, Kambia, Koinadugu, and Bonthe. We are also on track to provide an additional 422,600 people in these districts with access to safe drinking water by April of 2017. To build a financially sustainable and scalable water service model, an operating cost-recovery strategy will be piloted in small towns.

Mr Speaker, our exposures to the vulnerabilities of climate change and the imperative to sustain our water and other livelihood sources have further necessitated action to protect our environment. A spatial database for Environmental Impact Assessment license and baseline spatial database for natural resources in Sierra Leone have been completed to ensure effective protection and management of the environment and its natural resources. The Environmental Protection Agency has also developed a national climate change policy which has been adopted by Cabinet.

Energy

Despite our economic challenges, the provision of electricity continues to be central to our recovery process and ultimately to our national development agenda. With the ambitious target of doubling access to electricity to 250,000 households under the 24 months recovery programme, my administration is seeking to double total operational power generation capacity from 75 MW to 150 MW.

Already, the construction of the three mini-hydros in Charlotte, Bankasoka and Makali has been completed. The ministry has signed contracts to supply, install and commission thermal generators in Port Loko, Moyamba, Kailahun, Kabala, Kambia,

Bonthe, Kamakwei and Pujehun. Also, this Honourable House has ratified the agreement between my Government and the Abu Dhabi Fund for Development in respect of the installation of a 6MW Solar Park to serve Newton and its environs. By June 2017, stand-alone solar systems will be installed in 50 Community Health Centres nationwide.

The rehabilitation of 6 power plants in Makeni, Blackhall Road and Kingtom is also on track. The rehabilitation of generation and evacuation networks to reduce technical losses is well on course. The completion of the Wellington express line prevented an estimated 26,000 people from losing access to electricity in the east end of Freetown. We have completed the Environmental Impact Assessment for the Bo-Kenema upgrade, which will reduce the estimated 38% technical losses incurred in the network.

Mr Speaker, to sustain the services, it is imperative to enhance revenue collection. We have therefore continued to implement other measures including the installation of 22,000 pre-paid meters to increase access to customers nationwide and to boost revenue generation. A Framework Agreement has been signed by the relevant stakeholders, including the Anti-Corruption Commission, to curb electricity malpractices.

Infrastructure

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, we still have a long way to go but we have changed the face of our towns and cities; we have linked up our country with the Republic of Guinea through the Kambia-Pamplap International Highway in the North and we are on course to linking up with the Republic of Liberia through Pujehun in the South. We have inaugurated the construction of another strategic and major road - the Moyamba Junction–Moyamba Town and the Four Bridges Project of Magbele, Mabang, Gbangbama and Moyamba.

We have taken action to widen to four lanes the Wellington–Masiaka Highway which will be tolled as part of the loan repayment arrangement. A new 11 meters wide bridge will also be constructed at Orugu, with structural strengthening of the existing Orugu Bridge.

Governance

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, my Government continues to work assiduously to improve efficient service delivery, uphold the rule of law and promote transparency and accountability. The Anti-Corruption Commission has strengthened the Pay No Bribe platform through an innovative reporting mechanism for citizens to anonymously report incidents of corruption and bribery online or through text messages. With support from the European Union, the ACC has also developed an online asset disclosure system, which is expected to commence in 2017. This system will make it easier for public officers to comply with the declaration process, and ease the storage and verification of declarations.

Mr Speaker, you will recall that in my last address to this Honourable House, I informed you that my Government will commence action towards:

- [i] Administrative restructuring of chiefdoms with the view to promoting good governance, peace, stability and social harmony at the local level; and
- [ii] Undertaking preliminary studies for the restoration of the Karene District and the creation of a new Province. We will soon announce the Proclamation for the separation of some of the amalgamated chiefdoms, the restoration of the Karene District, division of Koinadugu into two Districts and the creation of a new province.

Mr Speaker, our commitment to moving forward the decentralization process is unshakeable. It is in this light that we commend the contribution of partners to our decentralization process and urge them to speed up support to our efforts at overcoming the remaining challenges.

Mr Speaker, my Government also recognizes that judicial reform and restructuring is critical for peace and prosperity, and key to promoting good governance and the Rule of Law. Our current Justice Sector Strategy and Investment Plan [JSRSIP III] has the goal of making justice accessible, efficient, fair and affordable in Sierra Leone.

Our Justice Sector reforms have ensured the deployment of magistrates and other justice sector officials across the country. We have also established the Legal Aid Board to provide indigent persons with legal representation.

We have expanded on the scope and breadth of performance contracts to improve effectiveness and efficiency in the public sector. We have also increased the coverage and scope of public sector audits. In 2015, 90% of Government expenditure was audited. Already, the audits of all 19 Local Council Accounts for the financial year which ended 31stDecember 2015 have been completed. The Audit Service continues to undertake the audit of all class "A" mining Chiefdoms. The audit of donor funded projects, including World Bank and the International Fund for Agricultural Development [IFAD] projects is ongoing. The Audit Service Sierra Leone is far advanced in discussions with the African Development Bank [AfDB] for the audit of projects funded by the ADB.

Mr Speaker, my government will also expand our breadth of accountability and transparency by ensuring that our Audit Services cover local and international non-Governmental Organisations, Civil Society Organizations that receive monies and are implementing projects and programmes on behalf of the people of Sierra Leone.

Integrity should not only be displayed in public offices; integrity should be exemplified in our relationships because it is a driver of employment, growth and success. When hard working compatriots in the Diaspora send money to start businesses, build houses or support their communities, do not squander it. Working with integrity with their money will create more jobs and encourage them to create more opportunities in the country. Wealth creation depends on working diligently when employed by international investors or national businesses. The availability of jobs does not only depend on opportunities government creates, they also depend on the work ethic, discipline and integrity of individual citizens.

Mr Speaker, my Government remains committed to freedom of expression and of the press. We recognize that the media, including the emerging social media, are tools that could be utilised to move the country forward with respect for truth, dignity, and inclusion; or it could be a weapon for infringement of rights, spreading ill-will and creating spirals of smear campaigns and division. Being a public official is no license for your character to be falsely smeared; having a smart-phone is no license for you to

infringe upon the privacy and dignity of ordinary citizens. We are creating policies that will nudge our citizens towards utilising the media for enhancing respect, providing evidence, and increasing knowledge of global and national trends. But we will also act to enhance accountability regarding the use of social media. It is within our mandate to ensure this, and we shall be steadfast in doing so.

Mr Speaker, government's policies, programmes and projects are either directly or indirectly implemented by civil servants. Effective service delivery therefore is dependent on the capacity and professionalism of its personnel. Through the ongoing Civil Service Reform Programme, my Government is creating a leaner civil service in which skills and competencies are defined and aligned with organizational needs.

Youth

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, my commitment to youth empowerment remains unflinching. My Government seeks to develop a Youth Empowerment Fund which Cabinet has already approved. This Fund will ensure the implementation of priority areas identified in the revised National Youth Policy. The Fund will support interventions covering education and skills training, agriculture, health, technology and innovation.

Through the Youth in Fisheries Project, we have constructed and distributed 70 fishing boats, each with 40 Horse Power outboard machines and fishing gears to generate jobs and livelihoods for youths in coastal communities.

To reinforce youth participation in agriculture, agri-business and other economic activities, we are establishing Youth Villages. We have secured a total of 1,061 acres of land in Kabala and 250 acres of land at Mile 91 for training youths in Agriculture, Entrepreneurship, Vocational and Technical skills. The proposed structures and architectural designs have been developed and we have commenced pre-construction activities.

Mr Speaker, just yesterday, I launched the National Youth Service Scheme. This service will support our youths' career development, enhance their understanding of the country's social and cultural dynamics, and promote national cohesion. We will continue

with these initiatives to ensure that our youths become more productive and able to meaningfully contribute to national development.

Tourism

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, we have strengthened the Monuments and Relics Commission to lead the process in the preservation, protection and promotion of our Monuments, Relics, Natural and Cultural Sites. This includes enlisting several sites to be classed and recognized as World Heritage Sites by UNESCO, especially those on its Tentative List. Three sites have been declared as heritage monuments this year, namely: Zion Methodist Church, the grave of Madam Yoko and the grave of Bai Bureh. This comes almost 57 years after the last declaration.

The construction of a new cultural village at Mabala via Six Mile is nearing completion. In addition, the process for the construction of the first ever National Arts Gallery in Sierra Leone has commenced and will be a place where our artists and other artisans would be able to showcase their talents. Plans are also underway for the construction of museums in district headquarters towns.

Security

The capacity of our security sector is being strengthened to meet traditional and emerging threats to the stability of our nation. The Office of National Security has developed a Counter-Terrorism Strategy which is being implemented. We have developed an Elections Security Strategy to ensure a conducive atmosphere for free, fair and peaceful Elections. We have also designed a National Flood Response Plan defining a clear coordination road map for all stakeholders to comprehensively respond to floods and their attendant emergencies. We have ensured the training of 60 personnel from various MDAs under the West Africa Disaster Preparedness Initiative in Ghana early this year. We have also commissioned additional fire engines to boost the operations of the National Fire Force and have developed a draft fire safety law which we shall soon table before this Honourable House.

The Republic of Sierra Leone Armed Forces [RSLAF] is a pillar of my government's commitment to global Peace and Security. The RSLAF won accolades for its gallantry

and professionalism in peace keeping operations before they were halted during the Ebola Outbreak. We must resume this professional contribution to world peace. That is why, after consultations with the UN and AU, I have pledged a battalion for Peace-Keeping Operations. Preparations are underway to move this forward, and soon, the green white and blue of our gallant RSLAF shall again be flying in global peacekeeping operations.

We are also building the capacity of the RSLAF by enhancing training of officers both within and outside the country. In addition to infrastructural work at Gondama and Freetown, we have rehabilitated the Daru referral hospital at Moa Barracks and constructed accommodation for doctors and nurses. This facility will provide medical support to troops and their dependents as well as the surrounding communities. The flagship project for the construction of a modern battalion-size military barracks in the Kambia District remains on course with the selection of a prospective bidder almost finalised.

We have provided funding for the recruitment of police officers to fill the gaps created by attrition in the police force. The Police Academy project is also on course and the constitutional instrument for the legal basis of peacekeeping and law enforcement will soon be laid before this Honourable House for ratification.

In the meantime, the Sierra Leone Police continues to deploy Peacekeepers in Somalia, South Sudan, Darfur and Haiti. In 2017, the Sierra Leone Police will deploy a self-sustaining unit in Mali.

Next year, we will embark on the reconstruction of three accommodation blocks at the Advanced Police Order Training Centre at Kayainkaysa in the Samu Chiefdom in Kambia. My Government will continue to support the Sierra Leone Police to honour its international obligations towards Interpol and global peace cooperation in making our world a safer place.

Foreign Policy and International Cooperation

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, my Government has enhanced Sierra Leone's stake on the international stage. Our effort in advancing the mandate of the African Union

Committee of Ten on the Reform of the United Nations has been very visible. Sierra Leone's election to the Fifteen Member Peace and Security Council of the African Union; our role in advancing the work of the Committee mandated by ECOWAS to pursue dialogue in Guinea Bissau; and lately in the Gambia; and our leadership in promoting the interest of fragile and conflict affected states, are indicative of Sierra Leone's diplomatic assertiveness. Our contributions to the Peace building Commission and the signing and your ratification of the Paris Agreement on Climate Change have further enhanced Sierra Leone's presence and voice in the international arena. This new diplomatic assertiveness is being underscored through the opening and re-opening of embassies in strategic regions, including Kenya and Egypt. We are also taking steps to rehabilitate our embassy properties abroad.

On behalf of the Government and people of Sierra Leone, I thank the Governments of the United Kingdom, the People's Republic of China, the United States of America, Japan, Ireland, the Federal Republic of Nigeria, the entire membership of the African Union and the European Union and all our bilateral partners for their invaluable support to Sierra Leone. We also acknowledge the invaluable contributions of the World Bank, the IMF, the African Development Bank, BADEA, DFID, USAID, JICA, the Islamic Development Bank, Saudi Fund, OPEC Fund, the Kuwait Fund, and the Abu Dhabi Fund for Development, ECOWAS, the MRU, the United Nations and its family of Agencies.

Conclusion

Mr Speaker, 2016 has been a difficult year for all of us; but we shall move forward with greater energy and strength and determination. That was why I brought more young people in to the cabinet and other leadership positions than ever before. We shall move forward with greater inclusion, empathy and protection of the vulnerable; that was why I brought in the greatest number of women into the cabinet and other leadership positions than ever before. We shall move forward with bolder steps; that is why we are de-amalgamating chiefdoms, implementing a national school feeding programme, and sustaining our infrastructural development all over the country.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I call on you, as representatives of the two biggest parties in the country, as the elected, battle-tested and most legitimate voice of all the people of this country, to continue to support the extra-ordinary measures we have taken to move this country forward. The true measure of politics is not about fighting to divide the people; the true mark of leadership is about finding the common ground wherein we can work together to build a better life for our people.

Sir Milton Margai sent drinks to Dr Siaka Stevens on April 27, 1961 whilst he was being detained at Pademba Road Prisons; they were on opposite sides but Sir Milton wanted the founder of our party to celebrate our collective achievement of Independence. Sir Albert Margai, when he was Prime Minister invited even opponents to great lunches at his residence at Regent Road, Lumley. When he was President, Dr Siaka Stevens appointed a great opponent, Alhaji Sanusi Mustapha as Vice President. When Dr Joseph Saidu Momoh was President, he extended a hand of friendship to Sir Banja Tejan Sie and Dr John Karefa Smart. When Alhaji Dr Ahmad Tejan Kabba was President, he restored unjustly seized properties to their owners, including members of my party. These are the better values we need to draw upon to overcome the habits that sometimes delay our push for a better country.

Mr Speaker, to get to the destination of prosperity that we desire, we must remain united, focused and hardworking. The thriving economies of Asia did not achieve the great success we now admire because their citizens go to work late, leave their offices early or miss deadlines. These countries are giants of achievements because their citizens work hard, show discipline and commit their achievements to the advancement of their nations.

We still face challenges, but many amongst us have demonstrated virtues that this country needs, and we must salute them as models worthy of emulation. We will always remember Dr Umar Khan as an embodiment of true patriotism. We commend the hardworking Alhaji 'Nawal', a driver in Tonkolili. From being a poor apprentice with nothing to his name, he worked hard at his chosen profession, moving people and goods along the roads between Magburaka, Masingbi, Bumbuna, Bendugu, Kono and

Freetown. Today, Alhaji Nawal has his own vehicles and has built his own houses, stalls and provides employment for others. We salute youths at the Kenema Youth Farm who are cultivating hundreds of hectares of rice and cassava. Let us be inspired by the hard work and discipline of Mr Akiwande Lasite of the Grammar School, and the Rev Canon Modupe Taylor Pearce whose dedication to excellence at the Government Secondary School in Magburaka shaped the future of thousands of Sierra Leoneans. We shall ever be grateful for the shining examples of Madam Ada Baylor of the Albert Academy, and the thousands of teachers' right across the country, who were great shapers of the better destinies of many Sierra Leoneans. Let us pay tribute to the great Bishop Kelli of Bo, and the erudite Alhaji Osman of Bambara Tong whose sermons taught thousands to seek God's grace with courage, charity and largeness of spirit.

These are the testaments of the good that is in us; they are our better values; and this is the time to assert these better qualities to ensure our recovery and growth. We have done it before; we can do it again. We answered those who doubted Sierra Leone by rebounding from conflict to not only secure peace, but to also contribute peace keeping troops and experts on truth, reconciliation, disarmament and post conflict democratic consolidation to troubled spots in the world. Whilst we still mourn the tragedy of Ebola, the untold story is that Sierra Leoneans did most of the heavy lifting to end the epidemic. Sierra Leoneans provided the most personnel, contributed the most expertise as frontline workers, ran treatment centres with the highest survival rates and showed resilience that confounded those who had predicted that millions would die. Together, with doctors, nurses, and other health workers, with chiefs, teachers, civil servants and other public officers, with MPs, ministers, mayors, councillors, traders and youths, we ended the worst outbreak of Ebola in human history. Sierra Leoneans don't often tell the good in them that pushes this country forward; we don't often tell the story about how we are a most religiously tolerant nation, a most friendly citizenry, a very beautiful land with a solid history of achievements. We must not be too quick to forget our collective achievements. We have again been tested, but we must resolve to overcome our challenges with faith that wisdom inspires. Together, showing forth the good that is

ever in this country, we shall move forward with the recovery. Together, having in mind the truth and knowledge that our forefathers spread, and the mighty nations they led, we will do it again. Together, as we again pledge our devotion, our strength and our might, this Parliament, this government, all of you seated here today, all of our people, at home and in the diaspora, together, as we raise our hearts and voices on high nothing can stop our recovery, growth and development.

God bless you and God bless Sierra Leone.

LAYING OF THE PRESIDENTIAL ADDRESS BY THE MAJORITY LEADER OF THE HOUSE AND LEADER OF GOVERNMENT BUSINESS – HON. IBRAHIM R. BUNDU

HON. IBRAHIM R. BUNDU *[Majority Leader of the House and Leader of Government Business]*: Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, in my capacity as Majority Leader of the House and Leader of Government Business, I hereby lay on the Table of this Honourable House the Presidential Address so graciously delivered by the His Excellency the President, Dr Ernest Bai Koroma *[Applause]*.

ADJOURNMENT

[The House rose at 1.00 p.m., and was adjourned sine die].