

*The Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation
Republic of Sierra Leone
OAU Drive, Tower Hill, Freetown*

Ref: 3079/155

12 October 2018

From:

The Director-General and Ambassador-at-Large
Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation
Tower Hill
Freetown

To:

The Clerk of Parliament
Parliament Building
Tower Hill
Freetown

Dear Sir

Ratification of the Agreement between the Government of the Republic of Sierra Leone and the Government of the People's Republic of China on Mutual Visa Exemption for holders of Diplomatic and Service Passports

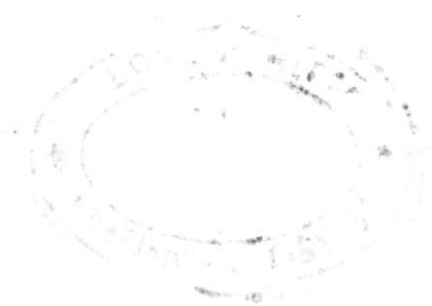
I am directed to refer to the above subject-matter and to submit the abovementioned Agreement and respectfully request dates for the Honourable Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation to lay the said Agreement before this Honourable House for ratification.

Please accept the assurance of my highest consideration as I await to hear from you.


Patrick Hassan Morlai Koroma

FOR: DIRECTOR-GENERAL & AMBASSADOR-AT-LARGE

CC: The Honourable Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation



EXPLANATORY MEMORANDUM

to the Agreement between the Government of the Republic of Sierra Leone and the Government of the People's Republic of China on Mutual Visa Exemption for holders of Diplomatic and Service Passports

This Agreement was signed during former President Ernst Bai Koroma's State Visit to China in December 2016. It supports and strengthens friendship ties between Sierra Leone and China.

This Agreement will add China among the countries Sierra Leone has visa-free travel facility. With this Agreement, citizens of our two countries holding diplomatic or service passports are to be exempted from visa requirements for entry into, exit from or transit through the territory of each our countries for a period of no more than thirty (30) days.

There are over 30 African countries that already have mutual visa free agreements with China. Sierra Leone is the first African country to establish bilateral diplomatic relations with China in 1971. China is one of Sierra Leone's strategic development partners with Chinese support in the forms of loans and grants towards training and education, health, agriculture, investment, trade, infrastructure, humanitarian assistance, etc.

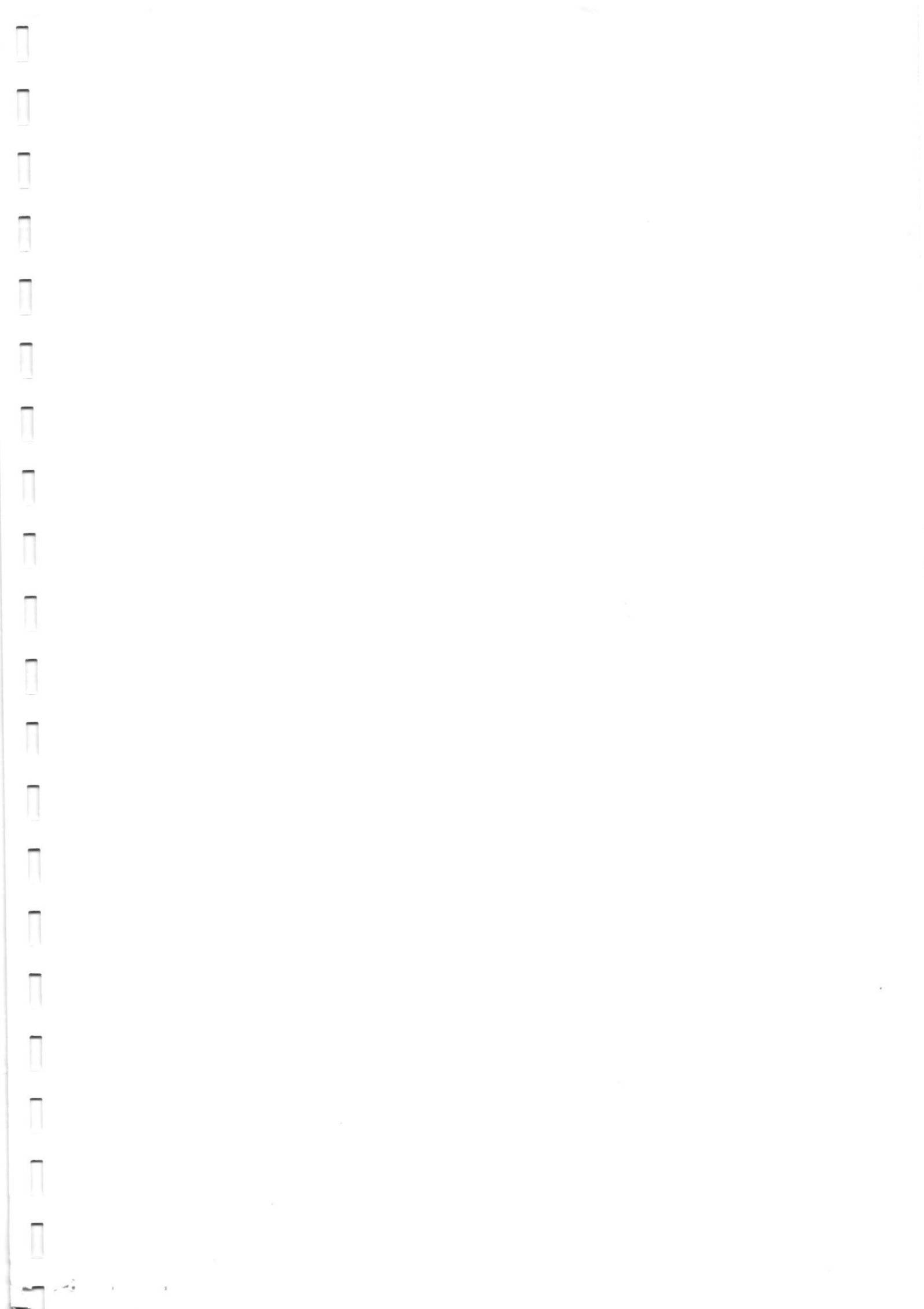
An immediate benefit following the ratification of this Agreement is that many government officials will notice a relief from the requirement of having to apply for, attend interview and waiting to be issued a visa to travel to China. This will be a tremendous time saving facility for our government officials. In the event of a late change of officers to travel to China then this visa exemption facility will enable the replacement officer to travel to China without having to worry about time to apply for a visa. This situation arose during the recent August 2018 State Visit and Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC) to China. Shortly before the trip, the State Chief of Protocol was bereaved and could not travel with His Excellency the President. So, the Deputy State Chief of Protocol stepped in but not until after hurried efforts to obtain a visa for him. With the ratification of this Agreement, such rushed steps would not be necessary as the officer will travel without the need for a visa.

The focal person for this Agreement, on behalf of the Director-General and Ambassador-at-Large, to liaise with Parliament is:

Patrick Hassan Morlai Koroma
Director, Human Rights and Compliance
Legal Affairs and International Conventions Division
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Telephone: 076335579

Done: Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation

Dated: 12 October 2018



AGREEMENT
BETWEEN
THE GOVERNMENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF SIERRA LEONE
AND
THE GOVERNMENT OF THE PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF CHINA
ON MUTUAL VISA EXEMPTION FOR HOLDERS OF
DIPLOMATIC AND SERVICE PASSPORTS

The Government of the Republic of Sierra Leone and the Government of the People's Republic of China (Hereinafter referred to as "Contracting Parties"),

Willing to support and strengthen their friendship ties,

HAVE agreed as follows:

Article 1

Citizens of the Republic of Sierra Leone holding valid diplomatic or service passports of the Republic of Sierra Leone, and the citizens of the People's Republic of China holding valid diplomatic or service passports (including passports for public affairs) of the People's Republic of China, shall be exempted from visa requirements for entry into, exit from or transit through the territory of the other Contracting Party.