

BROADCAST MESSAGE TO THE NATION BY HIS EXCELLENCY DR. ERNEST BAI KOROMA ON THE MARCH TO ZERO EBOLA CASES MARCH 31, 2015

Fellow Sierra Leoneans, we have all just concluded the launch of the Zero Ebola National Campaign.

This required us to stay at home for three days to allow health workers, social mobilizers and Ebola response workers to visit our homes with messages of activities against Ebola within our communities, all intended to help get us to zero. The National Ebola Response Centre is still compiling comprehensive reports, highlighting the level of success and the major challenges confronted during the launch. Preliminary reports however, show that thanks to the high level of compliance from the public, we were successful in bringing out the sick from the communities.

Let me therefore as your President take this opportunity to thank each and every Sierra Leonean from all Walks of Life and every corner of this country, for once again showing great sense of patriotism and discipline, and for adhering and giving support to the National Ebola Response Centre (NERC) during the three days campaign. I ask that we continue in this manner in our households and communities as we continue to fight this wicked virus, until it is removed from every community across the country.

Let me also extend my sincere gratitude to all our healthcare workers, volunteers, Ebola Response Workers, Civil Society Organizations (CSOs), Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), staff of the Ministry of Health and NERC, the security forces and all those who contributed in diverse ways to the Zero Ebola National campaign. A big thank you also to all our International Partners for their financial and moral support in the fight against the Ebola Virus Disease (EVD). It has been a difficult battle for all of us, but you have stood with us and supported us. As we plan for our post Ebola recovery, we hope that your support will continue.

In a communiqué on February 15, 2015, my fellow Mano River Union Presidents and I agreed on the target of zero new Ebola infections in our respective countries within 60 days. I am still committed to the agreements in the communiqué bringing Ebola to Zero in my country by April 16, 2015. Therefore I am reminding us all that the exercise that ended on Sunday, March 29th is by no means the end of Ebola in Sierra Leone. Unless and until we record no new Ebola cases for 42 consecutive days, we must not relax, we must not let down our guard and we must remain committed to the fight against Ebola.

New Ebola infections in our country have continued to decrease week by week and, as the numbers continue to dwindle, we need to scale down the treatment and holding facilities and the staff numbers in these facilities. This move will in turn impact the hazard pay policy, which officially ended March 31st, 2015. For those who will be laid off because of the scaling down of facilities, let me express my sincere thanks to you for your brave national service to your country. You have been great heroes of the battle; your patriotism has been unparalleled. Because you have all done a good job, because you have also gained valuable knowledge and skills that are forever now required in this country, the government is working towards providing employment and

absorbing some of you into the service as soon as possible to revamp the health system and sustain our recovery.

Let me also state that schools will re-open on the 14th of April as planned, and the Ministry of Education is working very hard to ensure that all necessary measures are in place for the safe return of pupils to school. No tuition fees will be paid in public schools for the next two years, and a national schools feeding program will be implemented in due course. We are also paying NPSE fees for all pupils in public and private schools; and BECE and WASSCE fees for all students in public schools. Government is also providing learning materials including free exercise books for public schools. No head teacher or principal in public schools should collect monies for these tuition and examination fees.

As we head towards the Easter breaks, let me also remind the general public that all the laws covered under the state of public emergency remain in force and must be strictly adhered to by all. The following restrictions will also remain in force for the Easter break:

- **No public gathering as covered under the state of public emergency laws**
- **No trading activities after 6 PM and on Sundays**
- **No activities around the beaches and restaurants during the Easter break**

We have been through a great trial, and it is not yet over. But if we continue to show courage, discipline and act on the knowledge that every individual, every family, and every community is a major part of this fight, we will be able to rid our country of this evil disease and to properly begin our recovery. The battle to get to zero cases is truly on; we must not bring down our guard until we get there.

A Blessed Easter to you all.

God Bless Sierra Leone!