



# **HANDING OVER NOTES**

OF FORMER PRESIDENT DR. ERNEST BAI KOROMA  
TO H.E. PRESIDENT DR. JULIUS MAADA BIO



**INAUGURATION DAY - SATURDAY 12TH MAY 2018**  
**FREETOWN, SIERRA LEONE**

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**OF FORMER PRESIDENT DR. ERNEST BAI KOROMA OF SIERRA LEONE  
TO MARK INAUGURATION OF H.E. PRESIDENT DR. JULIUS MAADA BIO  
SLATED FOR SATURDAY 12TH MAY, 2018**

Your Excellency Mr. President,

As you prepare to be inaugurated as the fifth democratically elected President of the Republic of Sierra Leone, I wish to hand over this written statement which I will term as my Handing-Over Notes. It is my hope that these Notes I have prepared, may be of assistance as you take up the mantle of providing leadership for Sierra Leoneans of all tribes, all regions, all religions, all political beliefs, all ages, all gender and all other demographics which sometimes seem to divide citizens who share a common destiny within one Nation.

Let me upfront state that for more detailed information especially covering aspects not directly mentioned in these written Notes today, Your Excellency may kindly wish to turn your attention to the two comprehensive addresses I presented at the Dissolutions of Parliament in 2012 and 2017 respectively as well as to the constitutionally mandated addresses presenting the State of our Nation at the start of every Session of Parliament, throughout my two terms as President. All my Addresses to the duly elected representatives of the People, comprehensively outlined collective achievements and challenges we faced as Sierra Leoneans. Furthermore, many members of my Government including Cabinet Ministers, have prepared their comprehensive Handing Over Notes which they have already given to your new team. You may also wish to find the time to read those.

Your Excellency, as we celebrate this third constitutional transfer of power from one democratically elected President to another, the event underscores our nation's commitment to and preference for

the Rule of Law and Democracy. These Notes therefore take full cognizance of the need to continue to deepen our democratic credentials and smoothen the ongoing transition process; especially in view of some prevailing circumstances which have unfolded amongst us after the recent, keenly contested Elections.

### **EBOLA & IRON ORE PRICE COLLAPSE**

Your Excellency, I want to commence my Notes with reference to the Ebola outbreak and concomitant collapse in price of our exports like Iron Ore. The Presidency under normal circumstances, come with so many challenges. However, it is difficult to find the words to describe the depths of despair I faced as President of Sierra Leone during the Ebola Crisis from 2014 to 2016. As compatriots, we went through unquantifiable human pains with massive socio-economic losses in all spheres. An evil virus devastated the three countries in our sub-regional basin at a time Sierra Leone had been described as amongst the fastest growing Economies in the World. Accordingly, Sierra Leone was the worst hit economically. Official World Bank data informs that the total impact of the Ebola crisis on Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone was 2.8 billion dollars but Sierra Leone alone lost almost 2 billion dollars. Guinea lost \$600million and Liberia lost \$300million. The comparatively huge loss of almost \$2,000million by Sierra Leone is because we had attracted much foreign direct investments which all dissipated when the Ebola outbreak coincided with global fall in prices of our export commodities like Iron Ore. The World Bank thus reported a massive contraction of our economic growth from an unprecedented high of 20.8% at one point prior to Ebola down to a negative of minus 21.5% by the year 2015. This contraction in economic activities resulted in a massive decline in domestic revenue collection and alongside the un-budgeted costs of imperative Ebola-related expenditure, the situation created significant fiscal pressure. The drop in exports affected the exchange rate which depreciated

massively as we were not exporting. Our inability to export as expected, caused serious depreciation in the Leone exchange rates of up to a massive 30% in 2016.

Your Excellency, as we managed a depressed Economy in a country totally brought down to its knees, with HOPE being our only commodity, it was our responsibility to not only fight Ebola but to also fight the additional burden of poverty it brought on our people. We had to take strategic decisions in the interest of lessening the burden of poverty on a citizenry confused by an attack on everything we held dear. One such decision was to maintain all employees on the Government Payroll including those whose tasks may have seemed to be redundant to shortsighted persons. For example, throughout the Ebola Crisis when all schools were closed down for over a year, my Government ensured every single teacher inside Sierra Leone continued to receive their salary – and on time. However, whilst we were able to pay the Take-Home salaries, the reality is that because of the severely depressed revenue collection, Government was simply unable to as well pay the social security monthly payments to NASSIT for all government employees. So a decision was taken for Government to undertake to owe to NASSIT the sums which were regularly calculated as Debts owed to NASSIT. So it was that during, and as a result of the Ebola Crisis, significant Arrears became owed by Government to NASSIT.

I am however very proud to state that as the Economy stabilized, we commenced to repay to NASSIT all arrears owed by Government as a result of the Ebola Crisis. This year of 2018 alone, prior to Your Excellency taking up office, several billions of leones had already been paid to NASSIT. The financial systems you have inherited was already settling those arrears and I am sure they will continue to smoothly settle them until all arrears built up from the period of the Ebola Crisis are cleared.

Your Excellency, I have recalled the Ebola Crisis to remind of the sheer depths of economic and emotional despair which Sierra Leone went through from 2014 to 2016 when we were hit by two major shocks of Commodities Prices Falling and the Ebola Outbreak. As you are aware, the Ebola outbreak resulted in the deaths of thousands of our compatriots and caused considerable socio-economic damage. It stopped our people from providing the usual family support to their loved ones, prevented them from paying last respects to deceased persons, barred us from even shaking hands and from doing many other things our culture and traditions taught us. On top of this, our schools closed down, our farmers abandoned their fields, the public faith in our hospitals was undermined, many local businesses folded up and foreign investors simply ran away.

Your Excellency, in the midst of such a depressed Economy, my Government had to keep the country running and most of all, we had the tremendous responsibility to keep the mental psyche of the nation hopeful and uplifted in the midst of social depression. This means throughout the Ebola Crisis, our pro-Poor and Social Welfare initiatives had to take priority over all else. At the same time, we had to continue with our wide-ranging reforms so as to keep the country competitive. It has been tough; very tough and I have nothing but deep appreciation for my Governance Team and the many hours of Hard Work put in to pull Sierra Leone out of the crisis and then rebuild in the post-Ebola period.

Your Excellency, as you can see from the above narrative, Sierra Leone was shaken to its very core by Ebola but as at the time of your assuming office, I am proud to state that prudent management of our Economy has yielded results. The real economy has now recovered strongly, growing by 6.3 percent. This recovery was as a result of improved activities in agriculture, manufacturing, tourism, mining, construction and other services such as our continued investments in development infrastructure. Despite some remaining

vulnerabilities, we have been able to stabilize the exchange rate which depreciated by only 5% last year 2017. This also helped to moderate inflation. Sierra Leone is a resilient Nation, and under my Leadership, we have pulled through.

Your Excellency, at this point, let me mention your Statesman role when you left your important Ph.D studies in the United Kingdom to come and join us towards the tail end of the fight against Ebola. Many Sierra Leoneans, including myself, appreciated the personal efforts you made to help combat Ebola; an enemy so vicious that it brought Sierra Leone to its knees. May God bless you for your patriotism you showed during those very low points for our Nation.

### **ON COURSE FOR 2030 ASPIRATION**

Your Excellency, contrary to negative electioneering and post-elections propaganda, the truth is that you have assumed the highest office in the land at a time when our country is already on course towards achieving our national aspiration of becoming a socially-stable, middle income country by the year 2030. This is owing to deliberate steps undertaken by my Government to counter Ebola, minimize the burden of poverty on the populace and implement wide-ranging reforms to ensure Sierra Leone remained very competitive on the global front. My Government was unique in that it was intensely pro-Poor and at the same time, Transformative in its outlook, policies and activities; all implemented with efforts on promoting good governance and respect for human rights.

### **PEACE, GOOD GOVERNANCE & FREEDOMS**

Mr. President, when I was elected President in 2007, our nation was still reeling from the effects of the war and was still categorized as a fragile state. The biggest challenges included the need to sustain the peace, build on our democracy and to hold the country together.

This required a delicate balancing act given the high expectations of the populace. Today, you have inherited a country that is rated the most peaceful in our region and one reckoned to be a nation in Africa where democracy has taken root. This is in addition to our notable progress in ‘Safety & Rule of Law, Participation and Human Rights’. Our army and police officers, who are widely acclaimed for their professionalism, now participate in international peace keeping. There should therefore be no doubt in the professional capacity of our security forces to execute their constitutional responsibilities.

As you are aware, Sierra Leone is a small country but with distinct regions and ethnicities and with high public expectations. While it is true that tribal and regional tensions always flare up during political processes, it is helpful to accept that the tribal undercurrent in our body politic requires deliberate and consistent affirmative actions and policies to hold the country in one piece and in harmony. In this regard, I resisted tremendous pressures for me to remove from key positions in the Civil and Public Service, certain citizens perceived to be supporters of your now-ruling SLPP party. Even at the Office of the President, perceived sympathizers of the SLPP, which was then in opposition, were allowed to be a part of the governance team. This was my style of inclusive governance so that the social and political fabric of the country could be woven in harmony as the Government served citizens.

Civil liberties and democratic freedoms enjoyed by Sierra Leoneans under my leadership are unprecedented. Though constitutionally guaranteed, it is a fact that so far, it is only under my leadership that Sierra Leoneans of all categories enjoyed the highest levels of freedoms and human rights ever. I will give two examples.

A very loudly vocal member of the then-Opposition SLPP who lived in America, would make weekly video broadcasts which he shared

all over the world through the social media. His broadcasts were full of horrendous, seditious and libelous attacks on my person and on my Government which had not an iota of truth to them. He eventually returned to Sierra Leone last year and quickly continued to engage in the same conduct which he now expanded to having appearances on radio, television and in print publications. Many concerned citizens contacted me and demanded for the said member of SLPP to be arrested and charged to court as the evidence against his libelous and seditious activities were so overwhelming. Some citizens said jailing the said SLPP member was one way of getting the said person to be silenced as we approached elections. Your Excellency, I declined the calls for Government to arrest and charge the said man to court because I believed in his right to express himself no matter how wrong his opinions were. His utterances were not a threat to my life so I let him be; even as he spread terrible lies against my person and my Government.

The second example is again of a member of the SLPP Opposition in London who was recorded on video publicly threatening of plans to wage war inside the city of Freetown during the 2018 elections. The alarming threats recorded on the video were brought to my attention with a request for Government to arrest him when he arrived on our shores. Indeed, on his arrival in the country some months back, his presence was brought to my attention with a demand from some quarters for the man to be arrested. Again, I refused for Government to do anything which may have been interpreted as intimidating him from his rights. Rather, the intelligence and security agencies were urged to scale up monitoring of all such concerned persons suspected of having plans to derail the peace.

Throughout my tenure, we did not hold any political prisoners or prisoners of conscience and my government put a moratorium on capital punishment. In spite of their shortcomings, we encouraged a

very free press and a vibrant civil society because I believe these are fundamental in promoting transparency and accountability and in deepening good governance and democracy.

Currently, our collective challenge under Your Excellency's leadership, is to assert special efforts to continue to build on the above state of affairs of our peace, democracy, freedoms, rights, the rule of law and national unity which you have inherited.

### **JUSTICE & UPHOLDING THE LAW**

Your Excellency, we have gotten to a point in the governance of the State where firmness has become an important ingredient in law enforcement and in addressing the challenges of indiscipline and impunity. My government has effected significant reforms in the justice sector; restored judicial administration to all districts with resident magistrates and provided legal safety net for all citizens through the formation of the Legal Aid Board. A more comprehensive report on our strides in this sector can be found in my various addresses to Parliament.

### **SUBSIDIES & POVERTY ALLEVIATION**

Although we have become more liberal as the world modernizes, the All Peoples Congress (APC), the party on whose ticket I got elected in 2007 and 2012, was founded on a platform of Socialism. Therefore, upon my election in 2007, I did not abandon the APC's core belief that Governance must be predicated on the importance of efforts to minimize the burden of poverty on the population, expand access for the common man and woman and do everything possible to leave no-one behind.

Against the above foundation and much to the displeasure of some of our valued development partners, my Government refused to end

Government's subsidies in various sectors. The subsidies cushioned the effects of poverty in a prompt manner that can be likened to your own 'Prompt Action On Poverty Alleviation' (PAOPA). This means my Government had already been on a pathway which you may now be comfortable to emulate as far as poverty alleviation is concerned. For my Government, we were willing to incur the wrath of some of our key partners than compromise on our obligations to help reduce the state of poverty we inherited our citizens to be in.

Some of these subsidies indeed created a burden on the Budget. So in addition to the critical financial obligations required to maintain the peace and stability such as recruiting and maintaining the officers and men of the Police, Military, Prisons, Fire Services and of course, the civil service including teachers and health care workers, we had to as well absorb the financial costs of subsidizing Tuition Fees at all levels from Primary School through to University; subsidizing our farmers with cash grants, seedlings and fertilizers; subsidizing health care services including my successful flagship Free Health Care for Pregnant Women, Lactating Mothers and Children Under 5 years; subsidizing Electricity so that it was not only the rich and affluent who could enjoy reliable electricity but those in lower social brackets as well; subsidizing participation in national and international sporting events so as to uplift the psyche of citizens; subsidizing the cost of fuel so as to keep the cost of living within reasonable levels for citizens already struggling in a country that was firstly post-war and now lately, post-Ebola; subsidizing Public Transportation in such a manner that government buses could travel to and from all major towns of Sierra Leone and bus routes within the capital city of Freetown had buses running at heavily subsidized fares especially for school children.

Every single one of these subsidies placed a huge burden on the Economy and there were Calls for them to be discarded but the after-effect of ending these subsidies will be a vicious cycle of

poverty which would spiral the poor living conditions of our people in a downwards manner. Each subsidy we undertook had a distinct and tangible justification.

Your Excellency now has to take a decision as to whether to continue to maintain the subsidies on electricity, fuel, rice, etc. etc. or whether to remove them and send the citizens deeper into poverty? For my Government, there was nothing to debate; we saw no reason to remove the subsidies and we preferred to incur the wrath of Development Partners than place more burdens on our poor citizens.

For example, during the Ebola Crisis, one measure to stop spread of Ebola, was to suspend schools throughout Sierra Leone. We suspended the schools which meant no school fees were paid. However, Government never stopped paying salaries to teachers nor did we stop paying attention to our obligations to support educational activities. After Ebola, when schools re-opened, we further subsidized school fees in the immediate post-Ebola period because, my Government saw the need to cushion the already heavy effect of poverty on parents. So we completely removed the burden of them having to raise funds to pay fees. In this way, our children continued to get educated and their parents could plough money for fees into other useful areas of poverty reduction in their lives.

Sierra Leone is currently the only country in West Africa where the Government automatically pays 70% of the University Tuition Fees for all its citizens so as to subsidise the cost of university education. In addition to subsidizing 70% of Tuition Fees, we also provide 100% full subsidies for various other categories like students from very poor families and female students accepted to study Science subjects.

## **REFORMS AND TRANSPARENCY**

In the midst of our efforts to rebuild and reduce the burden of poverty on citizens, we continued reforming and continued being the most Transparent government ever in the entire History of Sierra Leone.

In 2007 when I took over as President from the late President Kabbah (may his soul R.I.P.), he publicly lamented in his Handing Over Statement of how, and I quote: ***“Making the Auditor-General’s Report available”*** to the public ***“before it had gone through Parliamentary scrutiny”*** was something ***“Government could not tolerate”***. According to President Kabbah in 2007, ***“Even the President is not entitled to this document until after parliamentary scrutiny”***. However, I did not share his views and as a firm believer in Transparency, I ensured under my dispensation, the legal steps were taken so that as soon as the Auditor-General handed the Report to Parliament, it was instantly made available to citizens. Auditor General’s Reports are no longer the top secret document they used to be prior to my attaining office. Now, my Government has ensured the Auditor General’s Report is not only made freely available on request by anyone but, in addition, it is permanently published on the website of the Audit Service.

Indeed, we strengthened the Audit Service Sierra Leone (ASSL) with enactment of Laws which gave more independence and powers to the Auditor-General. We also ensured all employees of ASSL were highly paid. The annual wages for staff of ASSL totaled 21.6 Billion Leones. To get an idea of what 21.6 Billion Leones means, Your Excellency may want to find the time to compare it to the annual wages paid to staff of other important offices like National Electoral Commission. Indeed, my Government empowered and strengthened the Auditor General like never before in Sierra Leone.

Ensuring the instant publication of Audit Reports as they are laid in Parliament, have been very helpful in our multi-dimensional approach to combating corruption.

The downside to this is that areas of the Auditor-General's report which were later found to be inaccurate by Parliament, will get to be sensationalized in the media at detriment to the image of my Government. Despite this significant challenge, I have ensured that throughout my tenure, the people of Sierra Leone can all now freely debate the Auditor General's Report since they now have more understanding of what it contains. I am leaving office with my head held high in terms of promoting transparency.

I am also proud to note of how we institutionalized transparent Performance Contracts across MDAs, universities and colleges, and ensured the full and active participation of the media and civil society in analyzing performance of public officials. We also strengthened the participation of ordinary citizens in the budget preparation.

Furthermore, we developed an array of public financial management reforms to ensure prudent, efficient, effective and transparent management of public financial resources.

For the first time also, the Mining Sector transparently reported, disclosed and disseminated information related to taxes, revenues and all payments.

## **COMBATING CORRUPTION**

The assertion that our country is listed as the most corrupt in the world is completely inaccurate. Let me state that my government recorded considerable progress in the fight against corruption. My government strengthened independence and effectiveness of the

Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) by repealing the inadequate Anti-Corruption Act of 2000 and passing a new Act in 2008. The new Act broadened the scope of offences and gave prosecutorial powers to the Commission. A recent review of our country's compliance with U.N. Convention against Corruption, shows significant progress from where we were in 2007.

The mandate of the ACC is not limited to prosecutions and the Commission has paid sufficient attention to prevention. Sierra Leone therefore continued to make steady progress in the rankings. In the Millennium Challenge Cooperation Corruption Control Index, Sierra Leone has moved from 36 to 52 percent, a 16 point upwards movement. The Transparency International index also indicates an overall progress. My Government got a special public commendation from Transparency International when I requested the Auditor-General to undertake an Audit of how funds to combat Ebola were being managed right in the middle of the fight against Ebola. Indeed, never in history of Sierra Leone has such transparency been exhibited by any other Government prior to mine.

### **TRANSPARENT GOVERNMENT PAYROLL**

There has been a significant improvement in the transparent management and integrity of the Government Payroll in order to deal with the previously perennial challenge of 'ghost workers' and addressing Dual Employment. An EU-funded Biometric Data collection is now well underway. Payment of salaries is now much easier, accurate and transparent since employees are all now being paid into their individual bank accounts. For example, teachers' salaries are no longer paid as lump sums into schools bank accounts. Every teacher now has a bank account. The computerization of Subvented Agencies' payroll, which was processed manually, has ensured the existence of a consolidated Government Payroll and the payment of salaries of staff is done

directly into their individual bank accounts. The payroll database has also been updated with employees' NASSIT Numbers as part of efforts to ensure evidence of the existence of all Government employees. This is in addition to a Payroll Strategy prepared to guide future work on the sustainability of the Government wage Bill.

Mr. President, it is also worthy to note that in spite of the pressures on the economy, my Government was able to pay salaries of all Government workers on time and without any arrears. The salaries of public sector workers were also increased several times with the minimum wage increased to Le500,000 per month from Le21,000 in 2007. In 2007, the minimum wage could not even purchase half a bag of rice. As I hand over, the minimum wage can now buy two full bags of rice with change left over.

### **PUBLIC FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT**

Still on TRANSPARENCY, in addition to the Public Procurement Act, 2016 which brought Sierra Leone's public procurement in line with international best practice, we have also enacted the Public Financial Management (PFM) Act, 2016 which replaced the Government Budgeting and Accountability Act (GBAA) 2005. The PFM Act, makes provisions for improving the credibility of the Budget by restricting extra-budgetary spending, clarifying the use of contingency funds and laying a framework for the effective management of extractive industry revenues.

The PFM act ensured very high transparency in how our finances were handled. For example, Section 66 of the PFM Act, mandates the Accountant General to publish on a monthly basis, all revenues and all expenditures in both the Gazette and on the website of the Ministry of Finance. What this means Your Excellency is that Government in Sierra Leone is now so transparent that anyone from

anywhere in the World can go freely check as to how much money was raised and how much money was spent by Government of Sierra Leone every single month.

Your Excellency, this level of transparency means any one can now cross-check and disprove the recent false claim from some quarters, that for the past two years, my Government could not pay the salaries of Government employees unless money was first borrowed. It is absolutely incorrect for anyone to say monthly revenues raised were less than the Wage Bill so salaries could not be paid unless Government first borrowed money. All monthly revenues raised and transparently published every month for the past two years, were in excess of monthly Wage Bill (total salaries to be paid). Throughout my two terms as President, my Government always placed priority on settling the wage bill before any other monthly expenditure was undertaken. As President, whilst I trusted the staff at the Ministry of Finance, I double-checked whatever was stated. Your Excellency I want to humbly recommend that you may want to also do so; especially prior to making public statements on financial issues. Once again, the claim that my Government could not pay salaries without resorting to borrowing is absolutely not true. Any borrowing that was done may have been for other expenditure and certainly not for the Wage Bill which always took priority and always got paid from the more than enough revenue we generated every month.

### **TREASURY SINGLE ACCOUNT**

Another key reform has been the initiation of the Treasury Single Account (TSA) to unify and link accounts through which the government receives all revenues and transacts all payments. A comprehensive inventory of Government's bank accounts at the commercial banks therefore gave a consolidated view of government cash resources. The TSA became operational in August 2017, with a pilot implementation on 10 Subvented Agencies and Ministries.

However, we soon realized we had issues of legality around our implementation of the TSA. The urgent need to enact another Law to enhance the TSA, became apparent. To that end, my Government ensured that one of the final Acts passed through Parliament in 2017 was the Fiscal Management and Control Act which I assented to shortly before my tenure ended this year. This action of my Government now fully compelled MDAs to immediately deposit all collected revenues in to the Consolidated Revenue Fund; all in furtherance of the implementation of the TSA.

Your Excellency, let me here commend your Executive Order which sought to follow my implicit directives after I assented to the Fiscal Management and Control Act. Your Excellency is able to make that Order legally because I had just assented to the Fiscal Management and Control Act. Your Excellency may now wish to further enhance the legal atmosphere within which your Orders are carried out by ensuring the strengthening of the relevant legal frameworks.

### **EXTERNAL DEBTS**

I have noted the concerns relating to external debts. Insofar as we have made considerable progress in increasing internal revenue generation, the reality is that Sierra Leone still needs external support for its national development agenda while we continue to strengthen and grow the economy. Importantly, there has been unprecedented development in the country in every region, every district and in every sector. This comes on the back of prudent management of our external debt through the conduct of Annual Debt Sustainability Analysis and the development and implementation of a Medium-Term Debt Management Strategy. As a result, Sierra Leone's debt has remained without any high risk of debt distress throughout my tenure as President.

## **BIGGER ECONOMY**

My Government's unprecedented development strides are reflected in Sierra Leone now having a much bigger economy than when I took over in 2007. Back then, the monetary value of Sierra Leone's economic and business activities was estimated at five trillion leones. By 2017, this is now estimated at 30 trillion Leones. In 2007, the Annual Revenue generated within Sierra Leone was 500 billion leones; today it is 4 trillion (4,000 billion) leones. Foreign Direct Investment has grown tremendously from 288 billion leones to five trillion (5,000 billion) leones. We have also increased our international reserves from dollar equivalent of less than 600 billion leones to the current amount which is the dollar equivalent of 4 trillion (4,000 billion) leones.

Your Excellency, the last ten years have seen a remarkable overall growth in spite of the major exogenous shocks including the global financial crisis of 2008-09, the food and fuel price crisis during the same period, the collapse of international commodity prices, including our major export, iron ore, and the outbreak of the terrible Ebola epidemic. Over this last ten years, we have used this unprecedented growth in resources to invest in social services and infrastructure more than at any other time in our country's history. My Government's direct development expenditure on roads, energy, health, education, tourism, communication, information technology and other areas has been way above what it was in 2007. In 2007, the expenditure on direct development was 60 million dollars; By 2013, we were now able to spend 280 million dollars on direct development projects. Last year, the sum of 274 million dollars was spent on direct development projects. This is an 357% increase over the last ten years and has resulted in a visible and tangible increase in access to health services, education, electricity, clean drinking water, roads, agricultural services and information communication technologies. The transformation cuts across and has been remarkable and through it all, Sierra Leone's debt has remained

without any high risk of debt distress. Rather, the outcome of our efforts is a bigger and bigger Economy.

### **SEA & AIR PORTS TRANSFORMED**

Your Excellency, I am informed that your Vice President has already visited our sea port at Cline Town and has seen for himself the remarkable transformation that is ongoing to position our natural harbor to a major transshipment hub in the region. This has the potential to bring considerable economic benefits to our country. The Container Terminal Ports Extension Project is wholly financed by the private sector at a cost of \$120million. The TIDFORE 4 Berth port extension project is also financed by the private sector. The Kissy Ferry Terminal Development Project upon completion, will convert the Kissy waterfront to a luxurious touristic spot with sailing boats and beautiful hotels. It is now 40% completed.

In 2007 when I took up office, we barely had international airlines using the Lungi Airport because of many challenges including poor marketing of Sierra Leone and low civil aviation security standards. Ten years on, we have transformed Lungi Airport which is now a destination spot for twelve international airlines including some of the World's most famous airlines; and with arrangements in place for more flights coming including the Qatari airlines.

### **TOURISM & PROMOTING CULTURE**

Our transformation of Sierra Leone's tourism potentials is simply unrivalled in the last several decades. Our Lumley Beach has been enhanced with construction of beautiful hotels and entertainment spots and can today rival many of the famous beach resorts around the world with name brands like Radisson Blu. A new Hilton Hotel is set to be opened shortly. The transformation of the Tourism face of Sierra Leone is breath-taking. Tax incentives to the hotel industry

and an injection of fresh ideas into the promotion of Tourism have resulted in the United Nations last year classifying Sierra Leone as the fastest growing Tourism destination in the world; a far cry from days when Ebola thwarted our Tourism potentials. In developing our Tourism and Cultural industry, we nurtured our people to develop pride in who we are and in what we represent.

As encroachment and land disputes made their Aberdeen location no more ideal, the National Dance Troupe was relocated to an ultra-modern cultural centre at Mabala Village (off Six Mile) constructed by my Government, to house them and also serve as a non-formal Institute of Arts and Culture. In addition, construction of the first ever National Arts Gallery is now set to commence with funds from Action Aid Sierra Leone and from Government available to start the process. We have also laid the plans for three additional Museums to be constructed in Bo, Kenema and Makeni.

Indeed, throughout my two terms, Government let Sierra Leoneans develop pride in our capacity to achieve our own goals within our cultural beliefs. I found this was a basis for promoting unity in diversity. Your Excellency may now wish to leverage on the gains in the Tourism and Cultural industry to promote the course of national identity and consciousness.

### **EMPOWERMENT, EQUALITY & TOLERANCE**

Sierra Leone's youth empowerment, gender equality and religious tolerance credentials are highly rated across the continent and the world over. Our religious tolerance is a source of pride and the slightest inclination that it may be under threat will usually see a formidable reaction from all concerned to protect the co-existence of Muslims and Christians. Your Excellency will certainly wish to sustain and continue to strengthen this.

My Government has reviewed and reformed many laws aiming for gender equality through enhancing rights, improving and expanding access to services and justice for women. Many of our policies like the Free Health Care Initiative, were developed against a recognition of the importance of our Women as Partners in development. Indeed, Sierra Leone Women, during my tenure, have enjoyed appointments which broke the glass ceiling previously limiting their aspirations. With the first ever female Chief Justice appointed by me, it is a fact that the only positions which a woman is yet to hold or act within inside Sierra Leone are at the highest seats of the Presidency. My Government ensured our girls were inspired with the appointment of capable women in to high offices. There were an unprecedented high number of women as Ministers or Deputy Ministers in my Cabinet.

The empowerment of Sierra Leonean women was not only within the country. My Government fully supported the appointment of capable Sierra Leonean women like Haja Dr. Zainab Hawa Bangura as Under Secretary General at the United Nations; like Hon. Dr. Bernadette Lahai as Vice President to the Pan-African Parliament and like Madam Finda Koroma as the current Vice President of the ECOWAS Commission.

In respect of youth empowerment, we have appointed capable young persons to hold responsible positions. We have also initiated the Youths Internship programme to provide the hands-on experience our graduates so badly need to fit in the job market. In the same vein, we launched the National Youth Service Scheme which in addition, seeks to promote national cohesion. Other young persons have been supported through the Youth in Fisheries Project, public works and agricultural initiatives. The stage for the implementation of the Youth Villages concept to train our young people in various vocational skills had also been set to address the gap in the middle level manpower. You may wish to build on these

programmes as well as expand access to higher education. Already, my Government has increased from two to five universities and the ground work has been laid for the establishment of a sixth in the east part of the country.

## **EDUCATION**

Your Excellency, in view of the need to develop our country's human resource, my Government took Education as a priority so much so that Budget Allocation to the sector has increased from low levels of 3.7% which I inherited in 2007 to now be over 15% by 2017. We took deliberate actions to expand access to education at all levels. For higher education, we have ensured the establishment of three additional universities including the Limkokwing University of Creative Technology, which is the first ever public private partnership in our country's field of education. At the same time, we have secured funding from ECOWAS for the establishment of a brand new University in Kono which is now well underway.

My government embarked on restoring the dignity of Sierra Leone's oldest institution of higher learning by completely rehabilitating Fourah Bay College and constructing a massive expansion of the campus. New lecture rooms and other facilities have also been constructed on campus. Students and faculty are now poised to start using these structures.

We have also had challenges relating to the quality of education for which steps were taken to address as well as to improve on equity and efficiency of the education system in Sierra Leone. In this regard, my Government developed a Teaching Syllabus for Basic Education; strengthened School Inspection through Recruitment of School Support Officers; appointed a chairperson, commissioners and staff to get the Teaching Service Commission (TSC) operational; developed the first ever Inclusive Education policy; the first ever

Early Childhood Education policy and associated minimum standards document; and two Education Sector Plans (ESP), associated Implementation Plans (IPs) and Global Partnership for Education (GPE) programmes. We also conducted and published a comprehensive diagnostic study on education.

We secured funding of US\$17.9 million from the World Bank towards the implementation of a project on Revitalising Education Development in Sierra Leone (REDi\_SL) which lasted for three years and upon its recent completion, we again qualified for an additional grant of same amount for which I am informed your new Finance Minister has confirmed my Government's efforts have yielded fruits.

The fight against leakages in the educational sector was central in how my Government served the citizens. To this end, we conducted four (4) comprehensive annual school censuses with associated reports which have aided the completion of the teacher payroll cleaning exercise and saving of an estimated total of Le432 billion from the elimination of 'ghost teachers' over the last ten years.

During the immediate post-Ebola period, we provided teaching and learning materials for all non-private schools and students at a cost of Le26 billion and paid school fees for all non-private school students at a cost of Le67 billion. Over the past ten years, we have regularly paid fees for all school level public examinations. Just for the past year of 2017, my Government paid a total of Le16.7 billion as fees for all public examinations by our children.

Sierra Leonean students studying in various other countries as a result of bi-lateral scholarships, have benefitted from an astronomical increase in the amount of financial support they have been receiving from Government. This includes our full support of Medical doctors who graduated from COMAHS and then applied for support to undertake post-graduate medical studies overseas.

Your Excellency, as you can see, Education was a top priority for me and my outgone Government. Our efforts resulted in increases in enrolment and number of students completing all levels of schooling. My government had also recorded yearly increases in candidates taking NPSE and BECE examinations as well as yearly increases in pass rates at the BECE and WASSCE examinations. We have also ensured annual increases in the number of approved schools enjoying cash grants and other support from Government; for example, between July 2016 and July 2017, almost 400 more schools were approved for support. My Government further took action to address the problem of overcrowding in schools by constructing 225 classrooms between July 2016 and July 2017. These were in addition to the construction of 165 wells and 362 WASH facilities in schools.

Mr. President, one important initiative in the country's education sector you may wish to build upon is the revitalisation, extension and improvement of the school feeding programme to incentivize and keep the children in school. This may be crucial in your free education programme.

## **HEALTH CARE**

Regarding the health sector, a mantra of my vision for Sierra Leone was not only improving on the aforementioned spread and access to Education but also our realization that Health is Wealth, ensured we positively transformed access to health care for our people. To address challenges in health care, especially Maternal and Child Health, a breath-taking number of infrastructure and services have already been implemented with even more to soon be added.

Nine tertiary hospitals are being upgraded as national medical centres of excellence and over 57 other health facilities are either being constructed or rehabilitated; with the latest being the newly

constructed Pediatric hospital complex in Kailahun. In the Western Area alone, five additional hospitals at Lumley, Kingharman Road, Macauley Street, Rokupa and in Waterloo - are at advanced stages of completion and each will have 100 bed space thus adding 500 more bed space to the number currently servicing Western Area.

We have also expanded on the coverage of the Free Health Care Initiative by establishing the Sierra Leone National Health Insurance Scheme. Also, a National Ambulance Service and a National Blood Bank have been launched. We have merged our great strides in Energy generation with advancing the development of our health care services through provision of Fifty four (54) community health centres with round-the-clock electricity supply under the DFID funded Rural Renewable Energy Project.

Your Excellency, a challenge in Health Care delivery has been a limited number of available health care personnel. So, in addition to strengthening of the infrastructure, my Government realized the absence of trained staff inhibited our vision especially in the area of women delivering their babies. To this end, there was a Multi-Disciplinary Clinical/Foreign Medical Team of 43 medical doctors, 4 radiographers and laboratory scientists to temporarily plug the human resource gap in the sector.

To combat this shortage of skills, we have further established the School of Clinical Sciences to train our health workers to become Physician Assistants able to complement our doctors. In addition, Teaching Hospitals have been established to provide Specialist and Postgraduate medical training in-country to our locally-trained medical doctors in various fields. My Government also instituted a National Midwives Training School. We believe as we roll out more trained personnel, we can more speedily combat the dangerous levels of mortality and morbidity numbers especially for mothers and children.

There is however a lot of success scored over the past ten years. For example, the number of women delivering their babies with skilled birth attendance has increased from very low catchment numbers to 62% at the last DHS report whilst 87% of all deliveries now happen in safe institutions. The number of midwives inside Sierra Leone is now over 600 from below 100 when we took office.

I was amazed to hear some say the Free Health Care Initiative of my Government has not been productive. Within just one year of its implementation, the Free Health Care Initiative resulted in nearly 2 million (2,000,000) additional number of Under-Fives outpatient consultations and care visits by pregnant women increased three-fold. These trends have continued. The immunization coverage for children increased from an annual 67% as in the year 2006 to 82% in 2011 and has been steadily leaping upwards apart from the break during Ebola Crisis.

Completely free Caesarean Section operations and free healthcare with no fees for young children, are saving countless lives of women and children. Apart from the nearly 2 million additional under-five consultations recorded in the first year, 12,000 very serious maternity complications were managed in health facilities with a 60% drop in the fatality rate in these cases. At the PCMH referral hospital, the number of maternity admissions grew exponentially. The excitement was palpable nationwide as families no longer had to worry over the cost of producing babies.

However, despite visible indications of marked improvements, our international partners consistently report that there is no improvement in dire statistics of death and sickness amongst mothers and children. As a Government, we have tried to understand the reasons behind this disconnect by introducing our own Maternal Death Surveillance & Response (MDSR) Strategy which is now enabling Government to generate its own refined data

and statistics on maternal deaths. This Strategy launched last year will allow Government to understand real trends in real time and also take remedial action to end whatever are the reasons behind the disparity in the services delivered and the dismal indices.

With the introduction of Free Health Care, over 80% of the most essential drugs are now available at all times, in public health facilities, resulting, to the increase of over 60% hospital and PHU attendance by pregnant and lactating women and children under five years of age. The Free Health Care Initiative has been a total and complete success story throughout my tenure since I launched it. Your Excellency may now wish to ensure it does not get derailed.

### **ENERGY & ELECTRICITY GENERATION**

Mr. President, the lack of electricity has been one of the biggest hurdles to our nation's development given that my Government inherited the darkest country on the planet. In 2007, the entire country's electricity production was 47million kilowatt hours raised from a mere 10 megawatts. I am handing over the country with 350 million kilowatt hours produced from over 280 megawatts. We achieved this monumental success through various efforts including exploring thermal, hydro and solar potentials; thereby restoring power, for the first time in over thirty years, to major towns across the country.

Another reason for our successful efforts has been amendment of our laws so that National Electricity Generation is now separated from Sale and Distribution of Electricity. In this way, private entities are now legally able to invest in the Electricity sector. As a result, the access to electricity supply is now expanding all over the country especially in provincial areas. Brand new electricity supplies have transformed the social livelihoods of many rural towns like Makali, Segbwema, Panguma, Gbinti, Conakrydee whilst

places like Kono got electricity for the first time in 32 years; Magburaka for the first time in 33 years; Port Loko for the first time in 32 years and Lumley Beach for the first time after 32 years. Charlotte village is also set with a brand new hydro-electricity power supply.

On international cooperation fronts, two electricity interconnection projects, namely the West African Power Pool (WAPP) and the CLSG (Cote d'Ivoire, Liberia Sierra Leone & Guinea) are set to contribute significantly to our national effort of overcoming energy shortfalls.

Nationally, active ongoing projects and other planned projects such as Bumbuna Phase-2, Betmai, CEC, the Solar Park and various Solar Farms will soon bring on board an addition of almost 300MW which are already targeted to be shared nationwide including in Kailahun, Kenema, Kono, Bo, Pujehun, Bonthe, Moyamba, Mile-91, Kabala, Kamakwie.

We have further secured a \$53 million funding for the complete overhaul of the Bo/Kenema Power Station to considerably improve electricity supply to those two major cities as well as several villages along the power lines. Several other projects are ongoing to generate more electricity and improve the quality of electricity supply across the country.

### **SAFE DRINKING WATER**

Your Excellency, during my first term, I realized the importance of paying special attention to providing safe, clean and accessible drinking water to our compatriots. So at the start of my second term, I created a special ministry dedicated to just that. Many of my critics including within your political party, did not understand the importance of this new ministry and criticized me. I want to thank you for justifying my decision by also following in my footsteps with

your appointment of a Minister of Water Resources dedicated to ensuring the continuation of my efforts at providing clean drinking water to Sierra Leoneans all over our country.

Our visible, tangible successes in provision of safe water are worthy enough to compensate for all the unfair criticisms. As I hand over to you today, we have increased access to safe, clean drinking water to an additional 1,300,000 Sierra Leoneans outside of Freetown by constructing water stations and pipe borne water in their areas. For the capital city of Freetown itself, a seamless deployment of our Dry Season Project has ensured water gets delivered to many citizens throughout the Dry Season, through innovative efforts.

To be more specific, in Bo, Kenema and Makeni, the ‘Three-Towns Project’ is now fully operational and serving the entirety of those regional headquarter towns. Furthermore, in Pujehun, Magburaka, Yonibana, Mile-91, Kabala, Kambia, Lungi, Lunsar and Kailahun, brand new water supply systems are now operational. Port Loko water systems which were installed are now due for rehabilitation whilst Moyamba Town water supply is poised to soon be completed. In Bonthe Municipality and in Koidu City, pre-feasibility and Feasibility/Design studies are respectively now completed.

Your Excellency, you have inherited a Government that is already addressing the remaining challenges of clean drinking water for Freetown. I therefore draw your attention to the excellent findings in the Feasibility Report I commissioned on the potentials of the River Rokel being a source of water to serve the geographical stretch of communities from the proposed new city of Mamamah all the way into Central Freetown. We now know that the flowing waters of River Rokel can be extracted, purified and subsequently supplied to residents. With the diminished capacity of Guma Valley Dam to service a growing number of inhabitants of the capital city, these findings on River Rokel are welcomed developments.

Meanwhile, my Government has already initiated and secured funding for several projects which aim at bringing an end to the persistent problem of water shortages in the capital city and around Sierra Leone. You may wish to build on these initiatives to scale up the provision of clean drinking water in the Western Area and across the country.

### **ROADS & BRIDGES INFRASTRUCTURE:**

Your Excellency, it is common knowledge that my government embarked on the largest roads infrastructure development programme in the history of our country. On that score, we have completed the rehabilitation of the Makeni-Matotoka road in the North, the Port Loko to Lungi highway, the rehabilitation and widening of Makeni-Kabala Highway, the rehabilitation of bridges and widening of the Masiaka-Bo highway and the Matotoka-Yiye Road phase I in the North East; while the phase II Yiye-Sefadu construction is almost completed. The rehabilitation of the Bo-Kenema highway in the South/East and the reconstruction of the Kenema-Pendembu highway in the East have been completed while the Pendembu-Kailahun highway is almost completed.

Also in the South, the Bo-Bandajuma segment of the international highway between Liberia and Sierra Leone has been contracted out. It is to be connected to the ongoing construction of the Bandajuma-Mano River Bridge Highway which, with its 3 expansive bridges, is now at a very advanced stage. The ground work has been laid for the rehabilitation of the Taiama-Njala road and the Moyamba Junction to Moyamba Highway which would link up with the Moyamba to Shenge Highway that includes several bridges.

In the Western Area, we concluded the reconstruction and widening of the Grafton-Regent Highway; Wilkinson Road; the Lumley-Spur

Road-Wilberforce-Hill Station Road and the Lumley-Aberdeen Beach Road. Phase I of the Hillside Bye Pass Road is also now concluded as are mitigation works at Tengbeh Town & Moeba. The Lumley-Tokeh Road and Phase II of the Hillside Bye Pass Road are both nearing completion. The complete reconstruction and widening of the Hill Cut-Jomo Kenyatta-King Harman Roads are in progress. We have also completed the reconstruction of the Congo Cross-King Street-Signal Hill Road and the Congo Cross-Main Motor Road-Wilberforce road. Similarly, we have also completed the King Street-Freetown Road-Lumley Road-Wilberforce down through to enter into Lumley. A complete rehabilitation of the stretch from Blackhall Road through Kissy to Calaba Town has occurred on the 'Old Road' leading to the provinces. In addition, several kilometers of roads have been rehabilitated or built in many parts of the Western Area.

In the northern part of the country, we have further completed the Freetown-Conakry highway while the redesigned reconstruction of the Wellington-Masiaka highway into four carriage ways on a Toll System is progressing very well.

In meantime, a successful contractor is now mobilizing after my Government secured funding from the European Union for the construction of a dual carriage bridge over the Rogbere River. This is to happen simultaneously with the construction of the Mabang bridge and other bridges.

In addition to all these inter-district networks, the reconstruction of roads in every single district headquarter town and several other major towns across the country has been done. Many district headquarter towns have experienced tarred roads with very good cement drainage systems for the very first time under my leadership. The roads and drainages have not only been built but have been regularly maintained for sustainability and aesthetics.

Your Excellency may wish to ensure these roads continue to be maintained even as you expand on road developments.

For connections with neighbouring countries, we have ensured that the construction of international highways are completed or now far advanced. For the gateway leading from the South, I have already mentioned ongoing construction of the brand new Bo-Bandajuma-MRU Bridge international highway which will stretch from Bo district right into Liberia through Pujehun district and include 3 bridges.

For other international gateways, one of my first priorities on taking office in 2007, was to clear up the scandalous financial issues around the EU-funded Rogbere to Guinea road rehabilitation which the contractor had abandoned because of issues with then SLPP regime. My government successfully rebuilt the confidence of the European Union and we now were funded to not just rehabilitate the stretch but we received funding to construct a brand new international highway that led from North-Western Sierra Leone into Guinea; commencing from Rogbere Junction. That particular international highway constructed and completed in my first term, positively changed the face of traveling and trade between Guinea and Sierra Leone.

Another Northern gateway is the Makeni-Pamlap-Kamakwe-Madina Oula international highway which leads into neighbouring Guinea and is in far advanced stages of construction. On completion, it will lure trading partners from landlocked ECOWAS countries who will then use it to drive down to access our sea ports since our ports will then be nearer for them to access than the ports of other countries.

All these International Highways are of international standards and are critical in enhancing an increased trading ability not only with Guinea and Liberia but even beyond within the ECOWAS subregion.

To open up in-country movement and access, my Government has secured funding and signed Financing Agreement for the reconstruction of the Kambia-Kamakwe Road including a bridge across the Thomporay River. The procurement process is already in progress. For the construction and widening of the Mile 91-Robole Junction Road, all technical studies are at an advanced stage, while the Mile 88 – 91 Road has been contracted.

Mr. President, in spite of all of these wonderful developments, our people still need a lot more of infrastructure development to grow the Economy. Against this backdrop, I have commissioned the construction of the Mamammah Airport City and the feasibility studies for a proposed bridge across the Lungu estuary.

Your Excellency may want to explore creative ways of funding new infrastructural projects so as to allow your Government to redirect its own revenues on other social services. In this regard, I wish to recall Handing Over Statement of President Kabbah to me in 2007 when he advised me to consider **“a toll-system arrangement”** for the early construction of a key link road. I want to pass on that advice for you to consider toll roads as first advised by President Kabbah.

I wish to also use this chance to clarify another issue within the 2007 Handing Over Notes of President Kabbah. The many ‘roads’ which he mentioned were not all highways but the vast majority had been a mere grading of inaccessible roads by bulldozers to make them better passable. For example, the Koribondo-Gendema Ferry Road, the Makeni-Kamakwie Road and the Kurobola-Kabala Road he cited as completed, were merely having bulldozers grade and open up these passages after the war ended. It is only under my Government that each and every axis mentioned, got to benefit from actual highways being built thereon. Similarly, for the Kenema-Koindu Road which was cited as already completely

financed and under tender, it was only after I took up office that we had to complete securing required funds and even when we succeeded, we could only get for the Kenema-Pendembu segment. The final Highway from Kenema which my Government has constructed and is now continuing right into Kailahun Town, is of the highest international quality and of a standard much higher than the original design we had inherited in 2007.

### **NEW DISTRICTS AND DE-AMALGAMATION**

Your Excellency, I consider one of my greatest legacies as President to be the creation of two new administrative districts and the de-amalgamation (separation) of all those super-large chiefdoms which were formed by forcefully combining chiefdoms during colonial days. During colonial days, many large chiefdoms were created by forceful amalgamation of chiefdoms all over the Northern Province. Indeed, a great injustice has been the disproportionately low manner in which social services were delivered to large swathes of mostly the Northern areas of Sierra Leone; as compared to other parts of Sierra Leone.

Your Excellency, social services get regularly delivered according to administrative divisions starting from chiefdom level. However, this process ended up being unfair to many residents of Northern Sierra Leone. For example, an amalgamated chiefdom like Nieni in the Koinadugu district was larger in geographical size than the whole of Bonthe district but during colonial days, Bonthe district had been divided into eleven administrative chiefdoms.

So, when social services were being delivered by chiefdom levels, the residents of Nieni chiefdom, as large as their chiefdom was, will merely get a single allocation of what the geographically smaller Bonthe will get eleven allocations of. For example, if Government proposes to build one school in every chiefdom, Nieni will get one

school and Bonthe will get eleven schools. If an NGO project is to deliver a peripheral healthcare unit to all chiefdoms, then Nieni will get one of such unit and Bonthe will get eleven. The attendant disparity grew over time and resulted in the marked depression of places like Nieni all over the Northern part of Sierra Leone.

Studies presented to my Government, found this disparity resulted in abysmally low levels of social services delivery and was the primary reason why the North always had the worst of any index measuring negative human development; for example, the highest maternal mortality and the lowest rates of literacy.

This clear example of short-changing Nieni, was to be seen all over the North. To combat patently unfair allocation of social services is one of the reasons why my Government embarked on a re-division of administrative boundaries using geographical and population indices as our guide. In the process, two new districts, Falaba and Karene, were created, one new Region, the North-Western Province was also created and chiefdoms got to be de-amalgamated into their original smaller boundaries.

With the de-amalgamation of super-large chiefdoms and the creation of the two new districts, we have been able to reach more of our people in their communities and get them to participate in the governance of the state than ever before.

A similar reason is why we enhanced parliamentary representation by increasing Ordinary Members of Parliament from 112 to a total of 132 across the country.

### **FEW MORE THOUGHTS**

Your Excellency, as I end, let me now share with you a few more thoughts which were relevant to me during my term in office. You may find them to be of some interest to you:

1. I was well guarded in all dealings with international partners and investors; For me, the image and the economic interest of the Nation informed my decisions. After all, the ultimate goal of international investors is always to promote their interest.
2. To boost international cooperation, my Government prepared a Sierra Leone Foreign Service Transformation Strategy slated to run from 2014 to 2018. It helped Sierra Leone to effectively provide leadership in several sub-regional, regional, continental & global initiatives.
3. There is the propensity for many of our compatriots to cut corners. I had to lead the way by being hardworking and insisting on hard work so as to let our people appreciate that true success does not come easily but through hardwork.
4. I vigorously promoted increased agricultural productivity and value addition to help address the challenges in food sufficiency and the creation of job opportunities. This called for a fuller, stricter implementation of the local content policy as well as various forms of sustained support to local farmers.
5. I strengthened the protection of the drivers of the economy – ICTs, fisheries/marine and mineral resources. The laying of the fibre-optic cable across the country is almost complete. What remains is to connect businesses, learning institutions and homes. We have already piloted several schools, colleges and universities to ensure the facility is universally available, accessible and affordable; all in order to unleash its massive social and economic benefits in education and research, in stimulating innovation, and in revolutionising governance, health services and businesses. We leveraged on regulatory framework in the minerals sector to ensure that the country benefits more from its mineral resources.

6. The flood and mudslide disaster sharply brought to the fore the need to strengthen the enforcement of environmental protection; My government had also commenced to pay special attention to social housing with a view to relocate our compatriots in disaster prone areas. Already, my Government had initiated and received very firm commitment from Qatari Government for over 2,000 social housing units.

Finally Your Excellency, my Government, like all Governments, was not perfect. For a variety of reasons, I did not achieve some of what I had wanted; especially because of the Ebola interregnum. I however wish you all success in your positive plans for our country as you take over from me. ***I am now under your leadership. You are now my national leader.*** Please be assured I will always be available should you require my counsel. I am just a telephone call away. Meanwhile, let me reiterate that for more detailed information on what we have achieved over the last ten years and to understand some of the many challenges we faced, you may find the texts of my addresses I delivered at the Annual state opening and closure of parliament as worthy reference.

As I take a final bow out of governance, let me note my appreciation to all those who helped and supported me as I served our great nation; especially my wife, family, close friends, my personal staff and last but not least, my party; the All Peoples Congress. I also want to thank citizens for electing me to serve them for two terms.

Your Excellency, May 12th 2018 marks my ceremonial transfer to you, of the 'Staff of Office' which is the symbolic authority of the Office of the President of the Republic of Sierra Leone. I understand May 12th is your birthday so please accept my wishes for a Happy Birthday and a joyous celebration of your Inauguration. I once again wish you well and every success during your tenure.

Thank you and God bless the Republic of Sierra Leone.