

*Presentation by the Foreign Minister of the Republic of Sierra Leone,
Hon. Mr. Momodu Koroma to the second Country Specific Meeting of the
Peace Building Commission, New York, 13th December 2006*

Mr. Chairman,

At the outset and through you, allow me to express my sincere appreciation to the Chairman and members of the Peace Building Commission for convening this meeting and for the commendable efforts that have gone into the progress we have so far achieved in ensuring an early commencement of the actual implementation of the Commission's mandate in our two countries, Sierra Leone and Burundi.

Furthermore, permit me on behalf of the people and Government of Sierra Leone to congratulate and to warmly welcome the distinguished Permanent Representative of the Kingdom of the Netherlands as coordinator of the Sierra Leone country specific meeting and to immensely thank the two Vice Chairpersons, El Salvador and Norway for their commitments to our two countries.

As you are aware, Sierra Leone has over the last four years made significant progress in consolidating the peace. The journey has been long and rugged but with the resilience of our people, the goodwill of our partners and the United Nations, we have been able to make substantial progress. Since the war ended, we have developed a number of strategic frameworks for recovery, consolidating the peace, and jump-starting the economy to move the country forward.

It is in the hope of advancing that process that we welcomed and embraced the nomination and adoption of Sierra Leone as one of the pioneer countries on the agenda of the Peace Building Commission. The framework for identifying gaps and challenges identified for the Peace Building Commission's engagement in our post-conflict peace building and sustainable development efforts was derived from the three existing strategic frameworks namely; the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP), the Peace Consolidate Strategy (PCS) and Medium Term Expenditure Framework (MTEF), all which were developed through extensive consultative and collaborative processes.

We believe that these existing frameworks sufficiently address the issues at hand and articulate the goals we that the nation aspires to.

When we started this process in July, I had the distinct honour of presenting a balance sheet of the progress made and the challenges that lie ahead in our peace building efforts, I clearly acknowledged then that although a lot of progress had been made in the recovery and peace consolidation efforts a lot of work still remained to be done in critical areas. We are particularly pleased to note that the October meeting in which the Government's position was articulated by the Hon. Vice-President agreed on key priority areas and crystallized a process with clear goals, as was evident in the Chairman.s Summary. Specifically, four key priority areas were identified in the October 12 meeting, namely:

- Youth employment and empowerment
- Support to the Justice and Security sectors
- Support to the Democratic process
- Support for capacity building

Mr. Chairman,

On our return to Freetown, after the October 12/13 meeting in New York, we held a couple of briefing sessions with donors and other stakeholders in order to discuss the outcome of the country specific meeting on Sierra Leone. On their part, the civil society members who participated in the process here in New York also held briefing sessions with their membership and the press/ media.,

Government also embarked on a rigorous process of identifying critical areas of intervention or gaps, which are considered vital for the consolidation of peace in the short term. This was done by comprehensively mapping out the various existing or planned interventions by either Government or the Donor community. The critical areas identified in this exercise are those endorsed at our last meeting as stated above. The concept papers developed for submission to the Peace Building Fund clearly addresses the identified critical areas with the aim of identifying gaps and thereby preventing any duplication or overlap with the on- going interventions supported from various other sources.

Within the context of the peace building process, the Government has embarked on a number of initiatives aimed at addressing the critical areas. For example, Government in collaboration with the UN country team, other Donor partners and NGOs recently launched *the Youth Employment scheme*, the objective of which was to create over 100,000 quick- impact jobs in the public works domain. The scheme has taken off successfully and is already having an impact.

A very comprehensive strategy for the reform of the top echelons of the Civil Service has been finalized by Government but has been held in abeyance due funding constraints. We believe that if this process takes off it will serve as a catalyst for reforms in the entire public sector, as well as serve to attract thousands of qualified Sierra Leoneans in the Diaspora who are yearning to go back home.

Reforms in the Security sector continue unabated with the military, the Police and the coordination office of National Security all continuing to benefit from massive reforms supported by DfID, IMATT and the Commonwealth. Security coordination, however, needs to be decentralized to the Provincial and District levels to ensure a “blanket cover” of coordination.

We recently organized the Consultative Group (CG) in Freetown primarily to review implementation of the PRSP and to agree on the way forward. Among the outcome of that interaction, was the signing of the multi-donor budgetary support framework by four key donors. The meeting also acknowledged the fragility of the peace and reiterated the urgency of dealing with the youth and unemployment capacity for public deliver service and the need for the strengthening key institutions of the government.

On the macro economic front the rate of influence has dropped to single digit since last month and we are expecting a final word from the IMF on the death consolation before the end of the year. The country has also benefited from support for its infrastructure rehabilitation from various donors:

- i. DfID has provided a grant of five million pounds for improvement for urban water supply in the capital Freetown.

- ii. The Kingdom of Morocco is providing support for the rehabilitation and upgrading of electricity in the Capital.
- iii. The Government of the People's Republic of China has provided a credit to the National Telecommunication outfit, SIERRATEL for the installation of the wireless network that could guarantee access to people in remote areas.

In about seven months from now, the country will be holding a landmark Parliamentary and Presidential elections, the second since the war ended. The election will also yield a change of executive leadership since the country returned to democratic administration in 1996. The need for support for this election, given its implications for peace and democracy cannot be overemphasized.

Mr. Chairman,

This is the third country specific meeting since the PBC came into operation. We appreciate these preparatory meetings to propel us into action. We, however, believe that it is time for the PBC to be on the ground. It is also significant for the Commission to pay familiarization and confidence-building visits to the target countries.

We were also particularly pleased with the visit of members of the Peace Building Support Office to Sierra Leone. During their interaction with Government, they outlined the new approach and the next steps for this meeting and for the way forward and specifically suggested the elaboration of a Priority plan and the formulation of concept papers for submission to the Peace Building Fund (PBF), which we have done. These two sets of documents derive clearly from the wide process of consultation within the country as well the in-depth discussions in this Commission

Mr. Chairman,

As we prepared to come to New York for this session, we decided to hold a final meeting with our donor partners resident in Freetown. The meeting was characterized by frank open and intensive dialogue on a number of issues. More especially, concern was raised about the following;

- i. The absorptive capacity of the country or the lack of it;
- ii. The speed of implementation vis-à-vis accountability for funds/resources and;
- iii. The content of the process and;
- iv. The institutional arrangements for overseeing and monitoring the process.

Mr. Chairman,

On the question of absorptive capacities, we believe the Peace Building Commission by its reason d'être is uniquely placed to play a critical role in this area. Every area of intervention identified by the PBC process must have as an integral part a Capacity element as a means of addressing both the short term imperatives of the implementation and the longer term requirement of sustainability.

On the issue of speed, there is ample evidence in the literature to suggest that there is need for a paradigm shift in the whole area of "Aid disbursement to fragile states" because of the high risk of such states of a slide back to war. Therefore, without sacrificing accountability, there is a need for quick impact interventions and bridging funds in order to restore public confidence in the peace process.

We therefore, believe that the Peace Building Fund (PBF) should provide funding for areas already agreed with the Commission. This is particularly of concern because Sierra Leone is a post-conflict country with fragile institutions and highly prone to the risk of sliding back into conflict and should not be treated like a country with a normal development curve.

Mr. Chairman,

In our consultations on content and process, we have agreed that there was no need to create new mechanisms or institutions for ease of project monitoring and evaluation for the Peace Building Fund. Donors suggested that instead of creating a new Steering Committee as suggested in the last meeting with PBSO, we should use existing structures such as the existing pillars that have already been created for implementing the Poverty Reduction Strategy as well as the quarterly High Level Development Partnership and Coordination (DPAC) meetings designed to monitor progress in the PRSP.

We, as a Government have no objection to that consensus since Pillar 1 of the PRSP implementation coincides with the priority plan of this process. We also agreed at that meeting that once the funding envelope under the Peace Building Fund is approved, we should go back and consult widely on the process of developing specific project in order to avoid duplication of efforts and misunderstanding. In furtherance of this process some donors have even suggested a special communication strategy alongside the priority plan.

In as much as we reckon that the PBF is to basically provide the **initial catalytic funds** for **quick impact projects**, we must emphasize the need to firm up an overarching strategy for the Peace Building process. There is need for other initiatives to be articulated, alongside that of the PBF in order to give a holistic picture of the strategy. In this way, some of the criticisms that are currently being levied at the PBC as having a narrow focus will cease. It is only in this holistic approach will the PBC hope to *achieve its overall objective " of bringing together all actors to marshal resources and to advise on proposed integrated strategies for post conflict peace building and recovery"*

Mr. Chairman,

Let me conclude with the emphasis that we would like to leave this interactive meeting with explicitly defined timeline for the PBC's engagement with Sierra Leone. Simply put, do your plans call for 1,2 or three years in Sierra Leone? If so, what is the programme of activities? And what specific role is Sierra Leone expected to play in this engagement?

I thank you all for listening.