

**FOURTH STATE OF THE NATION SYMPOSIUM, JULY 2003
PRESENTATION BY THE HONOURABLE MINISTER OF
FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION**

**Mr. Chairman,
Ministers of Government,
Honourable Members of Parliament,
Members of the Diplomatic and Consular Corps
Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen,**

We are gathered here this morning to witness yet another stock taking of what the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation has been engaged in during the last year. A lot has since then happened. However, for reasons of brevity, allow me to focus my discourse principally on a limited number of activities undertaken within the past twelve months and what the future plans are, not forgetting our constraints. But let me start by outlining what I believe are the objectives and focus of the Ministry.

MISSION STATEMENT

The Mission of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation is to develop policies and programmes to govern relations with foreign countries and International Organizations geared towards projecting the strategic national interest(s) of Sierra Leone. The Mission of the Foreign Ministry is therefore subsumed under the Foreign Policy objectives of Sierra Leone, as spelt out in Section X of the preamble to the 1991 Constitution, viz: -

The Foreign Policy objectives of the State shall be:-

- (a) The promotion and protection of the national interest.
- (b) The promotion of sub-regional, regional and inter-African cooperation and unity.
- © The promotion of international cooperation for the consolidation of international peace and security and mutual respect among all

nations, and respect for their territorial integrity and independence, and

- (c) Respect for international law and treaty obligations, as well as the Seeking of settlement of international disputes by negotiation, conciliation, arbitration or adjudication.

Briefly therefore, the role of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation is to promote the national interest of the Republic of Sierra Leone, its security and prosperity and together with its sub-regional and international partners, to contribute to a peaceful and functioning world community.

STRUCTURE OF THE MINISTRY

The structure of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation has been deliberately designed in pursuit of the aims and objectives specified above. The political leadership of the Ministry is provided by the Honourable Minister and his Deputy. The Director-General who is the overall administrative head of the Ministry is assisted by a Deputy Director-General who is also in charge of the International, Legal and Research Division of the Ministry. Other Departments of the Ministry are: the Administration and Finance Division, The Economic and Technical Cooperation, Fellowship and Training Division, the Political Division, and the Protocol and Information Division. All these divisions are headed by Administrative officers of Permanent Secretary or Deputy Secretary rank. The Ministry has deployed its professionalism and expertise both at home and abroad to achieve our Mission. There are presently sixteen Embassies/High Commissions in Africa, Europe, Asia and America. These Missions are headed by Ambassadors/High Commissioners appointed by the President and ably assisted by Administrative officers of the Foreign Service.

MULTILATERAL COOPERATION

The Ministry has continued to perform its functions at the multilateral level. It is in this regard that the Ministry participated in most of the meetings of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the African Union (AU), the Organization of Islamic Conference (OIC), the Commonwealth, the United Nations (UN) and the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM).

a) **THE MANO RIVER UNION**

Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen,

You are all aware that because of internecine conflict within the States of the Mano River Union, this organization has not been functioning effectively. However, there are signs of improved bilateral relations between Guinea and Sierra Leone. In an effort to further reduce tensions along our borders, officials from my Ministry in collaboration with the Ministries of Defence, Internal Affairs, the National Security Advisory Office helped to resolve the problem of interpreting the boundary limits between the Republic of Sierra Leone and the Republic of Guinea relating to the borderline along the River Makona/Moa. The Liberian crisis continues to present problems within the sub-region. However the International Crisis Group on Liberia has been liaising with countries in the neighbourhood trying to find a diplomatic solution to the imbroglio. We in Sierra Leone have continued to play a very crucial role in that process. Recently a meeting of the Liberian factions was held in Sierra Leone during which they agreed to direct negotiations. His Excellency the President was also invited to the Akosombo Peace Talks.

b) **ECOWAS**

At the ECOWAS Summit held in Dakar, Senegal at the end of January 2003, issues relating to stability within the sub-region were exhaustively discussed. The meeting expressed concern over the serious threat of destabilization to the sub-region posed by the crisis in the Ivory Coast and Liberia. In relation to the Ivory Coast, the meeting took particular note of the continued constraint in deploying ECOMOG troops due to lack of resources and the unavailability of troops. The meeting however welcomed the consensus reached at Marcousis, France by all the parties to the conflict and called on the Authority of Heads of State and Government to ensure that ECOWAS plays its role within the framework of this Agreement.

The meeting expressed serious concern over the situation in Liberia in view of the persistent fighting between the Government troops and the LURD rebels. The meeting welcomed the creation of an International Contact Group on Liberia (ICGL) and encouraged the Government of Liberia to hold a National Reconciliation Forum involving all stakeholders, aimed at creating a conducive environment for free, transparent and democratic elections in October, 2003. Sierra Leone was especially commended for the considerable progress made towards the attainment of peace and democracy following the successful conduct of free, fair and transparent elections and for the rapid implementation of specific

programmes related to the disarmament, demobilization and protection of child combatants. In keeping with the ECOWAS initiative on Liberia, the International Contact Group visited Sierra Leone in May this year and had fruitful discussions with His Excellency the President and my good self. This was followed by a face-to-face meeting between the Liberian rebels groups and the ECOWAS appointed mediator Rtd. General Abdulsalam Abubakarr in Freetown.

The meeting also resolved that the ECOWAS Logistics Depot should be established in Freetown and Bamako, Mali with training facilities for the Armed Forces and Defence Personnel from ECOWAS member states, which will form the basis of peacekeeping operations in the sub-region. Recalling the important role played by the members of the Council of Elders in Conflict Prevention and Management, Member States were asked to nominate eminent personalities for consideration by the Heads of State. Sierra Leone appointed Former Chief Justice, Desmond Luke who represented the country at the ECOWAS Mediation Committee meeting in the Ivory Coast. Dr. James Jonah has also been appointed to the ECOWAS Committee for the Monitoring of Elections in the sub-region. Other issues discussed at the ECOWAS Summit related to the status of implementation of the protocol relating to the mechanism for conflict prevention, management, resolution, peacekeeping and security; the Moratorium on the importation, exportation and manufacture of small arms; the implementation of ECOWAS protocols and decisions relating to free movement of persons, the right of residence and establishment, and the issuance of ECOWAS passports. Matters of further cooperation within the framework of the NEPAD initiative were considered, especially issues relating to trade liberalization, common customs and fiscal policies.

c) **THE AFRICAN UNION (AU)**

Our commitment to the promotion of sub-regional, regional and inter-African Cooperation, as clearly spelt out in Section 10(b) of the Preamble to the Constitution of Sierra Leone led us into signing and ratifying the Constitutive Act, which fast-tracked the formation of the African Union. We participated in all deliberations that led to the launching of the African Union in July 2002, in a historic ceremony, which saw the smooth transformation of the OAU to the AU. Since then, we have continued to demonstrate our commitment to the principles and objectives of the Union by signing and ratifying a number of AU Treaties and Protocols. Quite recently, my Ministry submitted to the Office of the Clerk of Parliament for ratification, the Treaty establishing the African Economic Community, the Pan- African Parliament, and The Protocol on the Peace and Security Council of the African Union. At the third Extraordinary Session of the

Executive Council of the African Union held in Sun City, South Africa on 21st – 24th May 2003, representatives of Member States considered the document of the Policy Framework for the establishment of the African Standby Force and Military Staff Committee as adopted by the Chiefs of Defence Staff of Member States. The A.U. Commission was urged to continue with its engagement with the U.N, the European Union and the G8 to secure support for the enhancement of the peacekeeping capacity of the African Union, particularly in the area of logistics and funding. This, and other related issues were the subject of the recent meeting of Chiefs of Defence Staff of Member State held in Addis Ababa in April 2003. In preparation for the Second Ordinary Session of the Assembly of the African Union, which will be held in Maputo, Mozambique in July 2003, my Deputy led a three-man delegation to the Second Ordinary Session of the Executive Council, which was held in Ndjamen, Chad from the 5th to 6th March 2003. Among the important issues raised on economic integration was the need to rationalize Regional Economic Communities (RECs) and harmonize their relations with the African Union. This is in line with the objectives of the AU, which is to speed up the socio-economic development of the continent after the process of decolonization.

d) **UNITED NATIONS**

Sierra Leone participated in the 57th Session of the United Nations General Assembly in New York in September 2002. His Excellency the President, Alhaji Dr Ahmad Tejan Kabbah seized the opportunity to meet with some members of the United Nations Security Council. At that meeting which was hosted by Mexico's Permanent Representative to the United Nations and attended by several countries, pledges were made for continued international support to Sierra Leone, and for ensuring peace and stability in the countries of the Mano River Union. I also held wide ranging discussions with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees on the repatriation of Sierra Leonean refugees in other countries within the sub-region, and expressed concern over the prevailing situation in Liberia.

During the course of the General Assembly Sessions, my Deputy and I held wide ranging bilateral discussions with delegations from other countries. The Egyptian Delegation welcomed the moves made so far to reopen the Sierra Leone Embassy in Egypt, and mentioned that the Egyptian Government had earmarked 50,000 Egyptian Pounds towards setting up of the Chancery. The Spanish delegation also pledged to expand European interests in the tourist industry, especially the establishment of a Game Park in the Northern region of Sierra Leone. In the meeting with the Permanent Representative of the Republic of Namibia to the United Nations, the Deputy Minister emphasized the

necessity of rejuvenating south-south cooperation if Africans were to bridge the great divide. He therefore welcomed the idea of cooperation in the fishing industry between the two countries. Contacts have already been made through the usual diplomatic channels with the Fisheries Department of Namibia. At the meeting with the Cuban Ambassador and Permanent Representative to the United Nations, the friendly bilateral relations between the two countries were discussed. On the issue of South-South cooperation, since the Cuban people had made significant and admirable strides in the medical, agricultural and educational field, the possibility of cooperating in those areas was discussed. Follow-up contacts are being made with the Government of Cuba for bilateral assistance in the medical, agricultural and education sectors.

During the meeting with the Danish Permanent Representative, the issues discussed centered around Denmark's assistance to Africa in the fields of agriculture and debt relief, our decade long conflict and its devastating human and material consequences, and the concern of Government over the alleged deletion of Sierra Leone from the Danish donor list. Appeals were made for Sierra Leone to be put back on the list, and to consider viable economic projects with partnerships in joint ventures.

Sierra Leone also signed the Security Council Resolution 1373, (2001) which, inter alia, calls upon states to become parties to the international convention relating to terrorism. This resolution demands states to prohibit the financing of terrorist organizations, freeze their asset and refrain from providing any form of support, active or passive, to entities or persons involved in terrorist acts. In respect of the Security Council Resolution 1373 (2001), Sierra Leone has established a National Counter-Terrorism Committee (NCT), which meets at least once a month. As a signatory to the 1999 Algiers Convention on the Prevention and Combating of Terrorism, Sierra Leone participated in the African Union High-Level Inter-governmental Meeting convened in Algiers from 11-14 September 2002, to facilitate the entry into force of the Convention.

It is worth mentioning at this point that the United Nations Security Council has, during the period under review, passed two very important decisions relating to Sierra Leone. By UN Resolution 1436(2002) of 24th September 2002, the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone will begin a phased draw down of its operations and personnel. The first phase, which started in September, was completed in November 2002. The implementation of the second draw down phase is still in progress. This will be followed by a third phase and a period of review and consolidation of UN positions in Sierra Leone. Sierra Leone has also qualified for peacekeeping operations. This may have to involve the recruitment and

training of qualified and competent Army and Police Officers to perform peacekeeping operations of the United Nations. This indeed will be of immense benefit to our forces in terms of training and operations.

e) **THE ORGANIZATION OF THE ISLAMIC CONFERENCE (OIC)**

In our last report of the activities of this Ministry vis-à-vis our relationship with the OIC, mention was made of the Contact group on Sierra Leone, which was established in 2000, primarily to mobilize moral, material, as well as international support for the Government and people of Sierra Leone in the face of the major challenges brought about as a result of the decade-long civil war. Since its establishment, the Group has been meeting on regular basis until when it was finally agreed at a coordinating meeting of OIC Foreign Ministers held in New York in November of 2001 that a Trust Fund to assist Sierra Leone in the reconstruction and rehabilitation of the country be established.

Based on that recommendation, the Foreign Minister of Malaysia, in his capacity as Chairman of the Contact Group organized a follow-up meeting, which was held in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia in June 2002. I was privileged to have represented the country at that meeting, which was designed to finalize and adopt the administrative regulations and structure of the Trust Fund. The meeting later submitted a report to the OIC Foreign Ministers meeting, which was held in Khartoum, Sudan in late June 2002. The report of that meeting necessitated the convening of a Donors Conference at the OIC Secretariat in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia in January 2003. Sixteen countries were represented and the following pledges were made:

- **The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia:**

- US\$500,000.00
- Technical and human resource assistance to be given through Economic and Technical Cooperation between the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and the Republic of Sierra Leone. (It is indeed gratifying to note that this country has continued to receive significant humanitarian donations from Saudi Arabia).

- **The State of Qatar:**

- US\$500,000.00

- **The Republic of Sudan**

- Contribution towards the human resource development of the Republic of Sierra Leone in the following areas: -
 - i) Fellowship Awards to train Officers in the field of Diplomacy;
 - ii) Fellowship Awards for study in the Republic of Sudan;
 - iii) Fellowship Awards for the training of professionals in various fields.

At the O.I.C. Meeting held in Iran in May 2003, the Secretary-General was requested to use his good offices to accelerate the process of approving projects already identified for Sierra Leone. The Islamic Chamber of Commerce and Industry set up a Working group to act as a focal point, assuming the responsibilities of the monitoring mechanism for the implementation of the recommendations of the Private Sector. At a meeting I had with the Executive Secretary and other members of the Islamic Chamber of Commerce, they expressed interest in establishing close links with the Sierra Leone Chamber of Commerce and the promotion of investments in Sierra Leone especially in Tourism.

f) **SOUTH-SOUTH HEALTH CARE DELIVERY PROGRAMME**

The South-South Health Care Delivery Programme, which is an initiative of the G77, with its regional headquarters in Abuja, has continued to show considerable interest in the improvement of Health care in Sierra Leone. In April 2003 this organization signed an Agreement with the Government of Sierra Leone for Technical Cooperation. Sierra Leone will soon benefit from the recruitment of qualified medical personnel, the provision of drugs worth over US\$210,000 and the supply of 4(four) Ambulances.

BILATERAL COOPERATION

Mr. Chairman,
Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen,

On assuming office we thought the first starting point should be to change the negative image of our country brought about by the 10-year conflict. The best way to approach that issue was for the Foreign Ministry to lead the way with a diplomatic offensive whereby we could convince the world that since the war was over there was great potential for investors to come and invest in the country, and so create jobs for our people especially unemployed youths. In this regard we targeted regions

such as the Arab World, South-East Asia, and Europe including some Scandinavian countries.

Now that the war has ended, Sierra Leone is gradually responding to the current trend of economic liberalization and globalization. International trade, being one of the engines of economic growth, the focus of the Ministry has been the expansion of trade and investment promotion. During the period under review, the Ministry facilitated a number of negotiations/agreements all geared towards the socio-economic development of the country.

In a bid to foster closer cooperation with friendly countries and the need to break new ground, I paid official visits to the under-mentioned countries:

a) **RELATIONS WITH THE UNITED KINGDOM AND THE FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH OFFICE**

Relations between Sierra Leone and the United Kingdom have continued to grow steadily. This country has over the period benefited immensely from the interventions of the Department of Foreign and International Development (DFID), especially in the areas of Public Service Reform, Judicial Reform, and support to the Sierra Leone Police, the Anti-Corruption Commission and the Decentralization Programme. Also the Government of the United Kingdom recently signed an Agreement with Sierra Leone for support to the Poverty Reduction Strategy Programme. The sum of 200 Million Pounds Sterling will be available for this programme within the next five years.

Sierra Leone continues to be a committed member of the Commonwealth. Apart from the rather thorny issue of Zimbabwe very vital decisions were arrived at during last year's Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting in Australia. A new Commonwealth Fund for Africa was launched basically to encourage the growth of the private sector. There was an exhaustive discussion of the Commonwealth Business Council's 16-point Action Plan concerning issues relating to corporate social responsibility, corporate governance, e-commerce and a range of other trade issues such as increased investment across economies and securing private sector investment, enhancement of capacity to enable countries to participate fully in the WTO and the promotion of the NEPAD initiative.

During my official visit to the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) early this year the main focus of my discussions with senior officials of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office was on modernization of the Public

Service, including Information Technology and Change Management. I expressed the strong need for a new and vibrant Foreign Ministry in order for it to play a more meaningful and positive role in the complex and ever changing world of modern day diplomacy. In that regard, I solicited assistance from the Government of the United Kingdom in the following areas:

- The restructuring of my Ministry in order to enable us cope with the bilateral and intense multilateral activities of the 21st century.
- Training programmes for Foreign Service Officers that will help them sharpen their negotiating skills as well as improve their overall performance in the conduct of their day to day diplomatic activities
- Improve the communication system within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and between the Ministry and our Missions abroad.

**b) THE FEDERAL REPUBLIC OF GERMANY, SWITZERLAND
(SEPTEMBER 2002)**

During the course of my visits to these countries, issues relating to support towards the reconstruction of the country's devastated infrastructure, provision of a soft loan to enable the relocation of our Embassy from Bonn to Berlin, assistance for the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC), support for NEPAD and economic development cooperation in Africa were among the issues I raised with the authorities of the two countries. To me, these two visits could be regarded as a turning point that could lead to a better cooperation with both countries and possibly improve support in general from their two Governments.

The President also paid an official visit to the Federal Republic of Germany where he held fruitful discussions with the authorities. This led to the signing of a Debt Relief Agreement, and the resuscitation of GTZ operations in Sierra Leone. The German Embassy will soon be reopened in Freetown, and GTZ officials are currently engaged in Community Reintegration Projects in the Kailahun and Kono Districts. The Government of the Federal Republic of Germany has also donated the sum of Le2.5 Billion as support towards Sierra Leone's rehabilitation and reconstruction efforts.

c) **RELATIONS WITH FRANCE**

My Ministry has continued to emphasize the need for strong bilateral relations with France, which has provided considerable support to our national recovery programme. The French Embassy has recently been reopened in Freetown at Charge d'Affaires level for the time being and plans are underway for the resuscitation of the French Pedagogical Institute in Freetown and Bo.

d) **RELATION WITH THE ISLAMIC REPUBLIC OF IRAN**

Apart from strengthening the bonds of friendship between my country and the Islamic Republic of Iran, this visit was also designed among other things, to establish trade links and Economic Cooperation between our two countries. I was able to reactivate the Memorandum of Understanding and the Agreement signed by His Excellency the President during his visit to that country in 1996. I also emphasized the need for technical assistance and expertise in the area of oil exploration in Sierra Leone. I pointed out the importance of organizing an Iran/Africa Summit, which to me would consolidate the bond between Iran and Africa within the framework of the South-South Cooperation. The Government of Sierra Leone sent a high-powered delegation to the IRAN/AFRICA TRADE FORUM in March 2003 and during the visit of the Iranian Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs an Agreement was signed for a Grant of US\$1, 500,000 to the Government of Sierra Leone.

e) **RELATIONS WITH THE PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF CHINA**

In our unremitting efforts to turn the economy of the country around the Ministry played host to three delegations from the Peoples Republic of China which were here to discuss bilateral cooperation in the areas of agriculture and food production, the development of the energy sector which involved proposals for constructing mini hydro dams in the Kono, Pujehun and Moyamba Districts, as well as trade expansion. The Memorandum of Understanding signed in 2001 for the rehabilitation of the Bintumani Hotel has indeed yielded fruits. The Chinese are currently refurbishing the Youyi Building, the National Stadium and the Defence Headquarters at Cockerill. While they have carried out a face-lift of the building housing the Ministry, plans are currently underway for the construction of a new structure at Hill Station for the Foreign Ministry. Also a Chinese Medical Team will soon commence operations at the Satellite Clinic along King Harman Road, Brookfields. Another Agreement signed with the Chinese has resulted in the shipment of improved varieties

of Ginger for planting in Sierra Leone. All the abovementioned assistance is from the Gratuitous Chinese Loan of RMB 20 Million Yuan.

f) **RELATIONS WITH THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA**

Relations between the United States and Sierra Leone have also continued to grow from strength to strength. Through its programme of support to Overseas Partnership for International Cooperation, the sum of US\$24 million has been approved for kick-starting the operations of Sierra Rutile Ltd. Sierra Leone will also benefit from the 15 Billion dollars recently approved by President Bush for combating the AIDS epidemic worldwide. Another significant development has been the signing of an Agreement for the reopening of the International School in Freetown. Furthermore, negotiations are currently underway for the construction of a new United States Embassy Building in Freetown. This will eventually lead to the reopening of the Consular Section for the issuance of visas to Sierra Leoneans wishing to travel to the United States. Apart from its continued support to UNAMSIL, the United States has signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the Government of Sierra Leone for the establishment of an ECOWAS Logistics Depot and Training Facilities for Armed Forces and Defence Personnel from West Africa at the Freetown Depot.

g) **BILATERAL COOPERATION WITH OTHER COUNTRIES**

Fruitful discussions were also held with the Government of Malaysia leading to the signing of Economic and Technical Cooperation Agreements for the development of the Agricultural Sector, especially the Oil Palm Industry and the provision of scholarships. Discussions are underway with the Government of Bangladesh for developing the capacity of the micro-credit sector and other areas of bilateral cooperation. Also recently the Ministry signed an Exchange of Notes with the Ambassador of Japan for debt rescheduling and the provision of grants for the community reintegration programme.

The Government of Sierra Leone, through the efforts of this Ministry, will soon receive grants from the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia for the construction of the Hillside Road Project. The Italian Government has also provided the sum of US\$10,000,000 for the completion of the Bumbuna Hydro-Electric Project. The Government of Sierra Leone also signed a Technical Cooperation Agreement with the Egyptian Fund for the dispatch of Egyptian Experts in various fields of socio-economic development, including Agriculture and Fisheries.

CONSTRAINTS AND FUTURE PLANS

**Mr. Chairman,
Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen,**

We maintain 16 diplomatic Missions abroad at Ambassadorial level, with multiple accreditations. Hopefully with the revitalization of our economy, there may be need to establish a few more missions in very strategic areas abroad. Though the situation with our missions has improved slightly with the recent payment of outstanding bills and the renovation of some Missions/Embassies, Government needs to pay more attention to the status of our Diplomatic Missions abroad as they portray our image as a nation.

**Mr. Chairman,
Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen,**

For the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to operate in a manner commensurate to its professional nature, it must be brought in line with its counterparts in the world. This will involve closing the Ministry, reviewing the Foreign Service Regulations, Protocol Policies and Procedures, Organizational Structure, designing and implementing requisite training programmes that will meet the staffing needs of the Ministry. Career outlets must also be created in order to form a corps of trained, qualified and competent Foreign Service Officers, with prospects of becoming career Ambassadors.

A re-structuring exercise of the Ministry is currently underway, with emphasis being laid on the strengthening of the human resource base particularly at the low and middle level echelon, by organizing in-house training programmes under the auspices of the Commonwealth, which have proved to be very successful. Our officers also undergo overseas training programmes in

diplomacy in places such as Kenya (University of Nairobi), the United Kingdom (Oxford), Vienna, (School of diplomacy) the Foreign Service College in Islamabad Pakistan and Egypt (Cairo). Plans are also underway to organize a workshop that will come out with a Mission Statement reflecting the new Foreign Policy goals and objectives of post-war Sierra Leone.

I am however delighted to inform this gathering that in an effort to improve the communication and information flow with the outside world; this Ministry now has a Resource Center, complete with Internet and e-mail facilities. My officers now have the opportunity for reference and research in the preparation of documentations. Most of the officers are currently engaged in studying French and the use of Internet facilities. Also some very Senior Officers in the Ministry recently participated in a One-Week UNDP-UNITAR sponsored training Workshop on International Negotiation and Mediation Skills, at the British Council. These training programmes I believe will enhance their delivery capabilities, and the overall performance of the Ministry. We shall endeavour to improve the image of this our beloved country, and with the support of the citizens of this country as well as the international community, ensure its peace, and prosperity.