

**REPORT PRESENTED BY THE HONOURABLE MINISTER OF  
LABOUR, SOCIAL SECURITY AND INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS  
(MLSSIR) ON THE FOURTH STATE OF THE NATION  
SYMPOSIUM AT THE ATLANTIC HALL NATIONAL STADIUM  
COMPLEX ON THURSDAY AUGUST 14<sup>TH</sup> 2003**

## **I INTRODUCTION**

Mr. Chairman, Ministers of Government, Honourable Members of Parliament, Distinguished Leaders and Members of our Social Partners, in the Trade Union Movement, Employers' Organisation, including members of the Fourth State, Representatives of Non-Governmental Organisations, Ladies and Gentlemen, I am extremely gratified to be given the unique opportunity to once again present to this nation the status report on the activities, programmes, achievements, as well as challenges and future plans in respect of my Ministry at this Fourth State of the Nation Symposium. In prelude, let me commence with both the Mission and Vision Statements of my Ministry.

## **II MISSION STATEMENT**

To administer Labour and Social Security Laws and Regulations, maintain cordial industrial relations, ensure occupational health/safety in the work places, and create and promote employment opportunities, and provide Labour Market Information for Manpower Planning and Human Resource Development, thereby Reducing Poverty.

## **III VISION**

The Ministry's vision is the creation and promotion of decent and productive employment opportunities for all, especially among the disadvantaged groups, including the youths, women and disabled. To this end, the Ministry continues to be actively involved in developing and pursuing policies that promote labour, manpower planning and human resource development; self-reliance and a general sense of corporate culture; ensuring that labour market information is available nationwide to all and to foster a competitive and efficient labour market; safeguard the welfare of workers, including ensuring safe working environment, encompassing the fight against HIV/AIDS at the workplace and preventing worst forms of child labour; whilst applying tireless efforts in our tripartite responsibility through social dialogue to ensure

that workers (Unions), Employers (Management) and Government work in collaboration and harmony for higher productivity and industrial peace in a determined effort to strive for ever higher socio-economic development and poverty alleviation in Sierra Leone.

#### **IV MANDATE**

Mr. Chairman, to accomplish this Mission, the Ministry is charged with a broad-based mandate and responsibilities as per schedule of duties assigned to me by His Excellency, the President, Alhaji Dr. Ahmad Tejan Kabbah, as contained in the Sierra Leone Gazette No4 Vol. CXXXIII of 30<sup>th</sup> July, 2002, and reproduced hereunder:

- ❖ Labour, Manpower Planning and Human Resource Development
- ❖ Sectoral emphasis on needs of disadvantaged groups
- ❖ Employment and labour market policies
- ❖ Promotion of self-employment and income generating activities for youths in Sierra Leone
- ❖ Work Permit Bureau
- ❖ Workers Compensation
- ❖ Wages and Labour Inspection
- ❖ Industrial Court
- ❖ Relations with Industrial and Trade Organisations
- ❖ Promotion of Competitive and Effective Labour Market
- ❖ Occupational Safety and Health
- ❖ Factory Inspectorate, Factories Appeal Board
- ❖ Industrial Training and Trade Testing

❖ **Social Security and Safety Net Schemes -Social Security Division**

- To establish a comprehensive Social Security Scheme for all categories of workers in Sierra Leone
- To oversee the general administration of the Scheme in accordance with the Law, including the core ILO Conventions, consistent with National Objectives.
- Collaboration with relevant Government Ministries and National and International Organisations/ Institutions.

**V STRUCTURE OF THE MINISTRY**

The MLSSIR has varied, interesting and challenging responsibilities as indicated in its mandate above. Structurally, it is divided mainly into the Political, Administrative and Professional wings/Divisions.

**VI POLITICAL WING**

Politically, I am the head of the Ministry and, by consequence, the direct representative of His Excellency the President. I am ably assisted in this position by my Deputy, Hon. Joe Kallon. The political wing provides the strategic direction of the Ministry. Jointly with the Administrative and Professional Wing formulate and present policies for the consideration of Cabinet and Parliament, in the case where such policies hinge on proposing a Bill /for Legislation.

**VII ADMINISTRATIVE DIVISION**

The Administrative arm of the Ministry, in conjunction with the Professionals, ensures that policies emanating from Government, through the political head are effectively and judiciously implemented.

The Permanent Secretary (at present Mr. Jacob E. Quee) as Head of this Division, is further charged with the responsibility of coordinating all the activities of the Ministry. He is ably assisted in this Division by a core of personnel, including the Deputy Secretary, Senior Assistant Secretary, an Assistant Secretary, an Executive Officer and the Accounting and a coterie of Clerical Staff.

## **VIII PROFESSIONAL DIVISION**

The Professional Wing, headed by the Commissioner of Labour,(at present Mr. Joseph P. Genda) is further sub-divided into:

- Industrial Relations
- Employment Services
- Wages and Labour Inspections
- International Labour Standards and Statistics
- Factory Inspectorate
- Work Permit Bureau
- Workmen's Compensation and
- Social Security Administration

The Commissioner of Labour, with support from the Administrative wing, coordinates the activities of the Divisions mentioned above.

Mr. Chairman, Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen, I will not at this time make any attempt to give a detailed description of the various Divisions of my Ministry, for the simple fact that pages 66 to 77 of the Third State of The Nations Symposium encapsulates all that one needs to know about these Divisions. I thus swiftly go to describing some of the constraints and limitations that provide the background of the activity report of my Ministry at the commencement of the reporting period to ending July, 2003.

## **IX. GENERAL CONSTRAINTS /LIMITATIONS OF THE MINISTRY**

In order to adequately meet the challenges and responsibilities of the Ministry, an appropriate level of staff and logistical support is absolutely necessary and vital. Staff analysis undertaken by this Ministry this year and using 1997 as a base year reveal the following:

In the Labour and Industrial Relations Division, there were in 1997, 84 staff members, while as at January 2002, this number dropped to an abysmal level of 18. Mr. Chairman, in percentage terms, it is saying that, this Division alone suffered a loss of its staff by about 79%. This figure is inclusive of the fact that there is no Deputy Commissioner of Labour.

In the Factory Inspectorate Division, which is considered to be the bread basket/revenue generating arm of the Ministry, with currently no Chief Inspector of Factories or Deputy Chief Inspector or Assistant Chief Inspector of Factories, its staff strength as at 1997 was 43. It is sad to note that this number had dwindled to 10 in the year 2002. A further loss of about 77% of its staff complement in this Division.

Mr. Chairman, much as the Human Resource base was grossly depleted during the period under review, it is also worth bringing to the attention of the distinguished audience that the work of the Ministry was further stifled because of logistical constraints, particularly vehicles, noting that a lot of the work of the Ministry field work, including Surveys, Registration and Inspection of Establishments and Factories, Labour Statistics Information Gathering, Enforcement of the Work Permit Policies and Employment Promotion nation-wide, to name but a few.

Mr. Chairman, Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen, I am not ashamed to state that apart from my official vehicle, the only vehicle the Ministry has is rickety old saloon car whose maintenance cost is no longer justified by its utility or economic value.

In the Administrative arm of the Ministry, a wing charged with the responsibility to provide advisory, coordinating and other related functions to the Political and Professional wings of the Ministry, there were in 1997, 116 members of Staff. But the figure like, in other Divisions in the Ministry fell to 70 in the year 2002. Again, Mr. Chairman, a 40% drop in its staff strength. Mr. Chairman, please permit me to also inform my listening audience that in the core group of Administrative Cadre numbering 10, there were three Assistant Secretaries in 1997. A visit to the Ministry today will reveal startling figure of only one Assistant Secretary.

In its pursuit to implement its programmes and activities, suffice it to state Mr. Chairman that, the Ministry was fraught with a lot of constrains/problems in achieving its objectives.

Mr. Chairman, Ladies and Gentlemen, with the end of the war and peace having returned to Sierra Leone, the responsibilities of this Ministry are no longer limited to the Western area but must extend to all areas of the country. It is from this context that the constraints mentioned above should be viewed.

Mr. Chairman, in spite of the above constraints, particularly in respect of personnel, I am pleased to report a very significant good news

That in July, 2002, it pleased His Excellency the President, Alhaji Dr. Ahmad Tejan Kabbah to appoint to this Ministry a Deputy Minister in the person of Mr. Joseph M. Kallon, for which I am personally grateful.

The fore-going provides the back-drop of our activity report for the year ending July 2003.

## **X SHORT TERM GOALS**

The Chairman would recall that at the beginning of the new parliament in July 2002, His Excellency the President, Alhaji Dr Ahmad Tejan Kabbah required each Ministry or Department to produce a Management/work plan. The following were the specific short-term goals of my Ministry:

- i) Extend effective and active operation of the Ministry Nationwide
- ii) Participate in scheduled International Labour organization meetings and to endeavour to derive greatest benefit for Sierra Leone;
- iii) Seek increase in staff strength and promotion (where deserved) to motivate existing staff;
- iv) Promote Social dialogue and have an active and cooperative relationship with our Tripartite Partners;
- v) Rationalize and speed up the process of industrial dispute settlement;

- vi) Rationalize the system of Bargaining Certificates to facilitate social dialogue and promote industrial peace;
- vii) Promote the Occupational Health and Safety at the work place, through increase inspection and monitoring of factories and establishments;
- viii) Provide and enhance the quality of statistical information to aid planning sectorally and nationally;
- ix) Enhance the protection of work for Sierra Leoneans, through a well formulated work Permit system and compliance therewith;
- x) Intensify employment promotion schemes particularly for the youths, women and disabled;
- xi) Ensure the expansion of the administration of the Social Security System and to increase coverage of membership;

## **XI. ACTIVITIES**

Mr. Chairman, Ladies and Gentlemen, I will now report on my Ministry's activities with respect to the above short term goals in the period under review.

### **i) EXTEND EFFECTIVE AND ACTIVE OPERATION OF THE MINISTRY NATIONWIDE**

The ten years conflict that officially ended in 2001 restricted the operations of many Ministries mainly in the western area. My Ministry was no exception. Following the inauguration of the new government in July 2002, my Ministry quickly put together plans to tour the country to assess our provincial offices with the view of rehabilitating them and reactivating our operations in those areas, as well as looking at new areas for possible new offices. The eight days tour to Makeni, Kono, Kenema, Bo and Moyamba of a high power delegation headed by the Deputy Minister, included the Commissioner of Labour and the Deputy Secretary of the Ministry. Apart from the assessment, the tour provided unique opportunity to sensitise the public about the activities and mandate of our Ministry and the general orientation of government policies which was profoundly appreciated by our audience everywhere we went.

Mr Chairman, I am happy to report that following that tour, we have rehabilitated (limited rehabilitation) our office in Makeni, obtained new offices in Kono (Koidu) and Moyamba, and have since posted officers to each of those offices. I must note here the profound gratitude of my Ministry to the Administrative Officers in each of those districts, the Resident Ministers in each of the regions and most importantly the co-operation of the Paramount Chiefs in Makeni and Kono who expressed their willingness to provide the Ministry land in prime areas for constructing permanent Labour Offices. Through the good offices of the area office of the Ministry of Lands and Survey a piece of land was made available in Bo for erecting a structure for the Employment Information Services Centre. In Kenema, a colonial wooden structure, that was utilised as a carpentry shed is no more suitable for an office and thus funding for a new structure is being sought.

ii) **PARTICIPATE IN SCHEDULED INTERNATIONAL LABOUR ORGANIZATION MEETINGS AND TO ENDEAVOUR TO DERIVE GREATEST BENEFIT FOR SIERRA LEONE**

Three major highlights on the annual calendar for International Labour Conferences include, **ARLAC** (African Regional Labour Administration Centre) in Zimbabwe, **AULSAC** (African Union Labour and Social Affairs Commission), and the **ILO** (International Labour Organisation) in Geneva.

In the Arlac conference attended by the Deputy Minister in February this year the themes discussed were **CHILD LABOUR** and **HIV/AIDS AT THE WORK PLACE** and their linkage. On Child Labour, Mr Chairman, Ladies and Gentlemen, given the very important nature of this subject, since *children are the future* leaders of this nation, I cannot help but share with you the definition and minimum age level at the conference:

- i) **Definition:** in general terms ,child labour is considered to be work performed by children; the work being detrimental to their physical and mental development, the work interferes with the child's education, taking away their prospect for career advancement, the work exposes children to adverse conditions at the work place whilst still in a growing phase.

- ii) **Minimum Age level for admission to employment:** ILO Convention 138 sets a number of minimum age for different type of work but in the main provides that it should not be less than the age of completion of compulsory schooling, and in any case not less than fifteen years (some flexibility exist depending on the state of economic development of the country).

The experience gained from this conference enables us to

- a) formulate and develop work place policies and programmes on HIV/AIDS and Child Labour, initiating broad based stakeholder co-operation through the mobilisation of social partners in training programmes, sensitisation and networking.
- b) ensure that Labour and Occupational safety and Health Inspectors are trained to implement appropriate interventions against the worst form of child labour and take remedial measures,
- c) mainstream HIV/AIDS issues in management of occupational Safety and Health Programs and seek Technical Co-operation in this regard.

Other benefits included securing a training program for one of our labour officers in Harare Zimbabwe and a commitment by Arlac to provide resource persons for local training of our Labour Officers in Sierra Leone.

## **ILO**

This Conference attracts Tripartite Delegations from over 170 countries. With the best expertise in labour administration available, the most recent resource materials at hand and an unparalleled opportunity for networking. The Sierra Leone Tripartite Delegation of six Headed by my able Deputy assiduously participated in this year conference and in the following committees: Application of Labour Standards, Employment Relations, Human Resource Development and, Occupational health and Safety. Interspersed with the committee meetings were other very crucial meetings including those with various experts that culminated in the Sierra Leone Delegation having a roundtable meeting with experts and the eventual meeting, with the ILO

Director General in which we sought assistance for various training programmes, campaign against HIV/AIDS at the workplace, developing/upgrading a National Employment Plan for Sierra Leone. The encouraging response received would now be actively pursued.

**iii) SEEK INCREASE IN STAFF STRENGTH AND PROMOTION TO MOTIVATE EXISTING STAFF**

Mr. Chairman, you would recall my earlier point about the low staff strength. Thus, from the beginning of the reporting period no effort was spared in seeking the assistance of the Establishment Secretary's office and the Public Service Commission to address the problem. It is with delight and appreciation to the said two offices that we were not only able to get long outstanding and deserved promotion for the majority of our staff, but by February this year we also got six new Labour officers and six new Factory Inspectors. Though this is still inadequate given the expansion of offices nationwide, it is certainly a considerable improvement in our staff situation

**iv) PROMOTE SOCIAL DIALOGUE AND HAVE AN ACTIVE AND COOPERATIVE RELATIONSHIP WITH OUR TRIPARTITE PARTNERS**

Tripartism in industrial matters is like a tripod on which industrial peace rests. Mr. Chairman, Ladies and Gentlemen, I report here with great satisfaction the co-operative and cordial relationship with our social partners. The Employers Federation and the Sierra Leone Labour Congress. Our joint endeavour in promoting social dialogue facilitated the peaceful conclusion of two Trade Group Agreements during the period under review – Industrial and Manufacturing Trade Group Agreement; Hotel, Catering, Entertainment Trade Group Agreement. And even at individual company / organisational level, the spirit of tripartism helped to avert many potential awkward situations and there by maintaining industrial peace.

v) **RATIONALIZE AND SPEED UP THE PROCESS OF INDUSTRIAL DISPUTE SETTLEMENT**

Industrial disputes arise normally between workers and management and usually involve benefit entitlement, unfair termination of employment, non implementation or mis-application of the appropriate Trade Group Agreement, unfair terms and condition of employment etc. In all of these the welfare of the worker and the rights and obligations of each party stand out. The Ministry endeavours to settle matters through arbitration and where unsuccessful refer the matter to the Industrial Court. To expedite the process the Ministry operates a policy which provides that if a matter cannot be settled by arbitration within 21 days, it should be referred to the Industrial Court, all else being equal. The Ministry is pleased to report that there has been a high degree of co-operation by many employers in the arbitration process but regrets that there are some recalcitrant employers who have deliberately sought to frustrate the process.

Mr. Chairman, staying with the positive aspect ,I am proud to report that in the period under review arbitration and settlement of Industrial Relation matters in the Ministry resulted in cumulative settlement **figure of over one billion leones in the private sector alone** the most prominent of which was with Group 4 Falck, a security company taking over from another company Wakennut, that became defunct. This did not include workmen's compensation of aggregate settlement figure of over Le 84 million Leones.

The Ministry received 86 Industrial Complaints, 60 were settled amicably by arbitration. Of the 26 sent to the Industrial Court, 15 have been concluded and 11 pending.

In five of the situations in the private sector where actual industrial unrest commenced – Super Sound, Freetown Cold Storage, Selina Enterprises and Group 4 Falck etc prompt intervention by the Ministry expedited management compliance of payment awards as prescribed in the Trade Group Agreement or in the case of group 4 Falck payment of terminal benefit for workers of Wakennaut, a company whose liability they inherited following the demise of that company. All these matters were resolved quickly.

In the public sector, the Ministry's intervention in the health workers strike assisted the Ministry of Health and Sanitation and with much appreciated help from the office of the Honourable Vice President quickly brought to a peaceful resolution an awkward episode. I record here my profound gratitude to Honourable Vice President, Mr. Solomon Berewa, and the Minister of Finance who was finally persuaded to loosen the pulse strings a bit, to ensure a peaceful resolution of the matter.

Mr. Chairman, Ladies and Gentlemen, I wish to take this opportunity to draw your attention to the phenomenal successes of the **Industrial Court**. From its inception in the year 2000 for adjudication of industrial matters, to date it has handled over 170 cases of which 155 have been successfully completed, 4 thrown out, and 11 still pending. These are cases that would probably have still been lingering around with people denied justice and possibly creating industrial unrest. On behalf of Government and the people of Sierra Leone and on my personal behalf I record here my gratitude to the Chief Justice and Justice Sydney S. Warne and other judges and personnel who are doing such tremendous job.

**vi) RATIONALIZE THE SYSTEM OF BARGAINING CERTIFICATES TO FACILITATE SOCIAL DIALOGUE AND PROMOTE INDUSTRIAL PEACE**

Close observation of the Trade Unions and dialogue with them have highlighted some issues to be addressed for effective execution of their duties. Issues identified include:

- a) Fragmentation of Trade Unions without proper coordination resulting to poaching;
- b) Some trade unions operating without recognised offices;
- c) Trade Unions not serving their membership well, and as a result not serving the country at large.
- d) The Ministry issuing Bargaining Certificates sometimes without proper consideration of possible adverse circumstances;

- e) Some Unions holding Bargaining Certificates not justified by their membership strength;
- f) Multiple Bargaining Certificates held by some Unions, etc;
- g) Prevention of some Unions from participating in various Trade Group Negotiating Councils;

The above provided the impetus for my decision to facilitate the restructuring of the Unions and make them more proactive towards our national and international aspirations. Towards this end, Chairman, Ladies and Gentlemen, I have withdrawn all Bargaining Certificates and appointed a committee with the remit to:

- i) amalgamate the unions with identical activities in the same Industry,
- ii) ensure that the Trade Union councils are properly constituted,
- iii) make Schedule, of Trade Group Negotiating Council meetings according to Industries within a stipulated time to avoid payment of drawback of salaries and the financial management problem it may entail to the employers,
- iv) review the conditions for the issuance of Bargaining Certificates,
- v) review the format of the Certificate.

This stage of the process is now almost complete and my Ministry will shortly engage the Unions in a bi-partite dialogue for consensus on the restructuring and the new regime of Bargaining Certificate and a tripartite dialogue with Employers in the various sectors for which the Certificate shall be issued shall be done.

- vii) **Promote the Occupational Health and Safety at the work place through establishment surveys and increase in inspection and monitoring of factories and establishments**

Following the addition of six new staff complement of Factory Inspectors to

the Factory Inspectorate Division, the job of promoting the Health and Safety at the work place has intensified. For the first time in over a decade the Ministry can now do continuous factory inspection through out the year. Mr. Chairman, Ladies and Gentlemen, with just this increase in staff strength, we have been able during the reporting period,

- i) to register 477 Factories in the Western Area as compared to 374 that registered in 1999 raising Le 20,120,000 (Twenty Million One hundred and Twenty Thousand Leones).
- ii) inspected series of plants and machinery at workplaces generating the to update total amount of Le 11,791,000 ( Eleven Million Seven Hundred and Ninety One Thousand Leones),
- iii) registered and issued about 485 Trade Test Certificates to successful artisans of various trades ranging from auto mechanic, carpentry, welding, Masonry, tailoring, tinsmithing, blacksmithing etc. of this 80% were ex-combatants

There are plans underway for a comprehensive establishment survey nationwide.

Mr. Chairman, Ladies and Gentlemen, in spite of the best endeavours to ensure a healthy and Safe working environment in our work places the reality is that occasionally accidents do occur. In such cases we do have a responsibility towards the victim to get some compensation. And even where the accident may result in fatality (i.e. death) our responsibility does not cease until his bona fide next of kin(s) are appropriate compensated. The division of my Ministry that deals with such matters is **THE WORKMEN'S COMPENSATION SECTION.**

The Workmen's Compensation Section is responsible to ensure that Accidents/Deaths that occur in the workplace are notified on the prescribed Notification of Accident/Death Forms, and submitted to the Ministry of Labour, Social Security and Industrial Relations. Apart from ensuring that the employer notifies Accidents/Deaths, whatever percentage disability awarded by a certified Medical Doctor is computed in accordance with the Workmen's Compensation Act of 1954.

The Workmen's Compensation Act of 1954 is the legislation that governs the Accident/Death claims notified to the Ministry. It is therefore the

responsibility of the Ministry to ensure that Accidents/Deaths are notified when they occur. It is a crime punishable by Law not to notify such Accidents/Deaths to the Ministry.

During the period under review 36 Accidents were notified out of which 8 were Fatal and 28 were Non-Fatal. Total Compensation paid out by employers is Le 84,719,354.80. Despite these figures, there is still more to be done, as we have learnt that many cases go unreported inevitably to the detriment of the employees. My Ministry therefore will, through the Labour Education Programme currently under discussion with our Tripartite Partners, create the appropriate awareness to correct the present ignorance. Further my Ministry proposes:-

- The Revision of the Workmen's Compensation Act of 1954, especially with regards to the monetary compensation awarded and the fines levied against defaulters.
- More sensitization programmes need to be carried out nationwide to make people aware of the existence of the Workmen's Compensation Act (1954)
- Carry out inspections at the workplaces to ensure that Accidents/Deaths are notified to the Ministry and where percentage disability is awarded, the worker is compensated.

**viii) Provide and enhance the quality of statistical information to aid planning sectorally and nationally**

With the resumption of peace and stability in the country and access to every where in the country, we were able for the first time in over a decade to conduct a nationwide statistical survey. Lessons learnt from this have enabled us to develop a more comprehensive statistical questionnaire for both the public and private sectors. It is envisaged that, in due course, we should be able to come up with a publication on Labour Statistics that would enhance

government policies on manpower planning, human resource development, job placement and career development opportunities for Sierra Leoneans.

**ix) Enhance the protection of work for Sierra Leoneans through a well formulated work Permit system and compliance therewith**

Mr. Chairman, Ladies and Gentlemen, my Ministry seriously acknowledges that the socio-economic development of the people is determined by the employment opportunities available to them in the country. Government of all countries seek to protect jobs for their citizens particularly against foreigners through the Work Permit System. My Ministry takes this responsibility to our compatriots very seriously.

In a bid to effectively regulate the Employment of aliens and to protect qualified, able and willing Sierra Leoneans in the job market, a draft Legislation has now been finalised by the Ministry and will soon be presented to Cabinet for consideration and approval for onward transmission to parliament for enactment into Law.

Since its inception in 1993, the operation of the Work Permit Committee has been confined to the Western Area alone. The new effort the Ministry is now making is to extend the operations of the work permit to the provinces. In pursuance of this goal, it has been proposed that Work Permit meetings will be held twice in each region during the course of the year.

The operation of Work Permit Committee at provincial level will also have, apart from maximizing the revenue-base of the Ministry, the added advantage of tracking down illegal aliens who enter the job market and reside in the provinces. This will also serve as instrument to safeguard internal security.

Thus, in the period under review, the said completed draft bill titled Regulation of Non-Citizens (Aliens) Employment provides for higher application fees, more stringent assessment conditions, stiffer penalties for breach both by employer and worker, frequent monitoring and more powers for prosecution in the Industrial Court of offenders. To re-iterate, for the first time ever we will now be holding Work Permit Committee meetings in provincial centers; the Work Permit Committee in those areas comprising the Paramount Chiefs and Local Dignitaries and other stakeholders. In short Mr Chairman we will ensure that there will be no more hiding place for foreigners who will seek to steal the jobs that our compatriots should otherwise be doing.

In the period under review, I am happy to report that of the applications dealt with, including those of NGOs, substantial amount of revenue was collected. Although revenue generation is not the primary objective for the Work Permit it is nice to report that the fees collected amounted to **Le 113,619.000** out of ..... aliens. We shall continue to effectively collaborate with the Immigration Department and the Sierra Leone Police Force in the successful implementation of this aspect.

**x) Intensify employment promotion schemes particularly for the youths, women and disabled**

Employment possibilities in the economy focus on the public and private sectors. The public sector hardly has further room for expansion because of either over-manning and /or due to non-availability of resources. Efforts required for promotion of employment inevitably relies on the private sector. The private sector comprise the formal sector that is small and weak compared with the informal sector that is about 70% of the private sector.

With this backdrop, the activities of our labour exchanges that usually assist with job placement was further enhanced by the establishment in 2001 of a new center called the Employment Information Services Centre or EISC with the assistance of ILO. Since it started effective operations, the Centre has been able to maintain a comprehensive database in the following areas:

- \* Training Institutions
- \* Courses offered in Training Institutions
- \* Employers
- \* Work Permits
- \* Job Seekers
- \* Vacancy Notification
- \* Job Placement

The Centre presently has in its database forty-eight training institutions in the Western Area of Sierra Leone. These are TECH-VOC institutions offering a wide range of technical and commercial courses toward the production of required manpower for the nation's development.

The Centre's database has housed 1038 local jobseekers as of January 2002 to December 2002. Many more have already been registered awaiting inputting into the database.

Out of the 1038 local job seekers entered, there were 359, skilled and 110 unskilled and illiterate respectively at the time of registration. The lack of management and organisational abilities in many Sierra Leonean jobseekers compared to the aliens is found to be the main reason foreigners are preferred in jobs where such skills are preferred. This suggests that a lot has to be done if the unskilled/illiterate Sierra Leonean should be able to earn a meaningful livelihood in the society. In the meantime, Micro-credit Finance Scheme/Cooperatives can play a major role here to engage a good fraction of the unskilled in Small Business Enterprises; Agriculture a viable area to exploit in this regard since many of the illiterate jobseekers would only find their livelihood through small-business undertakings.

The Employment Information Services Centre (EISC) has so far been able to place over 400 registered Sierra Leoneans job seekers in gainful employment. These are skilled and semi-skilled.

Mr. Chairman, the major tools of addressing the objectives of the EISC are regular surveys. The following are the surveys the Centre has conducted.

Survey on:

Petty Traders Associations and Indigenous Enterprises

- \* Growth areas in the Economy
- \* Credit Institutions
- \* Training Institutions
- \* Training Options for Small Enterprises
- \* Demand for Marketable Skills

These surveys yielded fruitful labour market information. The business potentials existed in the areas of vegetable growing and horticulture. For the later, it was reported that there were increasing demands for flowers and beatifications of homes. Other demanded skills and services identified for agricultural diversification and intensification in the country were grinding services, marketing skills, Para-animator skills and agricultural engineering

services. Brick laying was another identified area where youths with the necessary know how could make a living as there was growing demand for skills under this area, given the laid out plans for massive reconstruction of the country following the end of the civil conflict. In the garage industry, demand for auto-electricians/mechanics and injections pump specialists is also high.

## **XI ENSURE THE EXPANSION OF THE ADMINISTRATION OF THE NATIONAL SOCIAL SECURITY SCHEME AND TO INCREASE COVERAGE OF MEMBERSHIP.**

Since NASSIT is an autonomous institution for which the Ministry of Labour, Social Security and Industrial Relations has a supervisory responsibility, it is but proper that I provide a brief background, in prelude to its activity report in the period under review.

But firstly, Mr. Chairman, Ladies and Gentlemen, it is with a heavy heart that I report that during the period under review, the Deputy Director General of NASSIT, Mr Abubakarr Sidique Dao, passed away. It was not only the position that he held, but he worked assiduously with my Ministry for the setting up of NASSIT. I want to record here my Ministry's profound gratitude to him as he lies in perfect peace. Mr. Chairman, kindly allow me a short pause in respect of his memory before I continue .....

### **MISSION STATEMENT OF NASSIT**

“To administer a Social Security Scheme which provides Social Security Protection to all employees in Sierra Leone, including Old Age benefits, Invalidity benefits, and Survivors Benefits, based on Social Insurance

Principles additionally, to administer a Social Safety Net for the identifiable vulnerable groups in society.”

The primary objectives of this mission statement will be to provide adequate income replacements under any of the contingencies covered under the scheme and to ensure an equitable distribution of the Social Safety Net resources. To achieve these, the Management of the Trust is determined to provide diligent leadership in the mobilization and prudent utilization of the resources, including the human resource.

## **STRUSCTURE OF NASSIT**

The Directorates of Operations, Finance and Administration and Technical have been established as well as the Offices of the Solicitor/ Secretary, the Internal Auditor and the Head of the Public Affairs.

The Research and Planning and Investment Departments are in the process of recruiting the Heads.

## **SHORT TERM GOALS**

### **a) *Registration of Members***

The Trust has registered 763 Institutions, while a total of 1,837 have received Registration Forms. The Biometric option, which is still preferred, is now being suspended. As an immediate interim measure a computerized but non-biometric system has been approved by the Board and a company engaged for that purpose.

### **b) *NASSIT Office***

Apart from the Head Office, one Area Office has been opened in Freetown (Guma Building Office).

In the meantime NASSIT’s Head Office is housed in the Sierra Leone Commercial Bank Building at 35A Lightfoot Boston Street, Freetown, occupying the second to sixth floors.

Area Offices in Bo and Kenema have been opened and that in Makeni is due to be opened in mid August. It is expected that all the Area Offices will be fully functional by the end of September 2003.

As at the end of reporting period, a total of about Le30 billion (Leones) have been received as contributions collected.

## **REVIEW OF THE ACT**

Management has taken another look at the National Social Security and Insurance Trust's (NASSIT) Act.(Act No 5 of 2001)

Some aspects such as validation of past services and provision of automatic credits for specific groups need to be further addressed; as well as other aspects of the Act revisited. I am pleased to report that this aspect has been concluded and has received the required concurrence of the Attorney General and Minister of Justice.

## **TRAINING AND CONFERENCES**

The Divisional Heads, the Solicitor/Secretary to the Board and Head of Public Affairs and then later the Deputy Director General, Head of Finance and Administration Department, one Area Manager and one Sectional Head all took a trip to understudy Social Security Operations at the Social Security and National Insurance Trust (SSNIT) of Ghana in Accra.

Subsequently, the Director of Operations went to Singapore on a Training Course for two weeks and the Director of Finance and Administration went to Turin for a course in Financing Social Security Schemes.

The Technical Director also attended the International Conference on Information Technology for Social Security in Spain.

The Director General attended the International Social Security Association (ISSA) African Conference with the Chairman of the Board and the Deputy Director General.

The Board has approved some Training Programmes for some staff both locally and internationally for the year 2003.

*All of this is to ensure that the management of this very crucial organization which will provide protection for all Sierra Leoneans in the time of need or old age continues to be in the hands of very competent people with the highest, finest and most appropriate technical capabilities.*

## **MEMBERSHIP OF INTERNATIONAL SOCIAL SECURITY ASSOCIATION (ISSA)**

NASSIT applied officially for membership of ISSA and was accepted at the last ISSA Bureau Meeting (9<sup>th</sup> May 2003). This sort of forum provides the unique opportunity for training, cross breeding of ideas about Social Security and keeping up to date with developments to ensure efficiency in management at all times.

## **MEMBERSHIP OF ADVISORY BOARD**

The Director General has been retained as a member of the Advisory Board of Social Security Actuaries and Statisticians.

## **PUBLIC RELATIONS**

Our Public Education Programme has been ongoing and the following Publications have been put out:

1. NASSIT News
2. About the National Social Security and Insurance Trust (September 2002)
3. Employers' Hand Book

Radio and Television Programmes have also been produced.

All of these are geared towards providing information and education to the public about NASSIT to facilitate understanding and compliance in the effort to achieve excellence and success.

## **RISK MANAGEMENT**

Management has appointed a Brokerage Firm to handle its Insurance needs. This demonstrates one of the prudent measures in the Trust's Risk Management.

Internal Audit is also Risk based and control measures have been discussed at both Divisional and Departmental levels.

## **INVESTMENT OF NASSIT FUNDS**

Both my Ministry and NASSIT are aware that contributions collected cannot have Treasury Bills alone as an investment vehicle as desirable as that may be in the short run. Plans are in advanced stage of progress for other modes of Investment in line with the socio-economic development aspirations of our country. The Investment Policy itself has been finalized and approved by the Board and shall be forwarded to Cabinet for its comments and advice. And Investment Projects of developmental nature would commence soon.

## **XII ACTIVITIES OUTSIDE THE STATED SHORT/MEDIUM TERM GOAL**

a) EISC implemented a project on behalf of the NCDDR called Employment for Ex-combatants. A workshop on setting up and management of small business was successfully conducted in Freetown, which attracted over 90 ex-combatants. The main purpose was to prepare the Ex-combatants who generally falls in the category of illiterates (no *disrespect intended*) for self-employment activities. Their fervent request for similar workshops in provincial areas to make available similar learning opportunity for other ex combatants makes the need of business setup and management skills training even in addition to other skills people may have very compelling.

b) In February 2003, three EISC staff undertook a Study Tour to Nigeria, sponsored by the ILO Regional office in Dakar. The main purpose of the Study Tour was to understudy mechanism and strategies used by similar countries that are already in existence and in the process of promoting employment in the informal sector. Thus complementing the effort of the Government which is the largest single employer in the formal sector in most

African countries, particularly Sierra Leone. Knowledge acquired by EISC staff will be of great help to engage, demobilise and retarget ex-combatants into self-employment.

Network with other similar countries that have already gone beyond the take-off stages was made possible by installing Internet facility in the Centre.

Develop new market strategies that can be relevant to our labour market, and eventually lead to economic development.

Exchange of skills/ technology on the spot witness and assessment of how Micro and Small Enterprises are successfully carried out in other countries.

To equip staff of EISC to acquire some experience that will help them squarely face the challenges ahead of them and the country at large.

From this experience, the Centre has produced a concept paper on an Association of Small and Medium Enterprises to develop the private sector with the view of creating more employment. The implementation of this shall be coordinated with the line Ministers of Trade Industry and State Enterprises and Development and Economics Planning.

### **c) Home Coming Summit**

In a bid to reverse the brain drain and attract capable, qualified and talented Sierra Leoneans abroad to return home and contribute their know-how to the national development of our country, our Ministry working with well meaning Sierra Leoneans in USA (Sunrise Group of Companies) initiated a HOME COMING SUMMIT which was presented to Cabinet. The Cabinet's concurrence thereby obtained resulted in a sub cabinet committee headed by the Ministry of Trade and State Enterprise. The summit itself was first of its kind in the history of this country. Some Sierra Leoneans from abroad have since set up businesses here and the expectation is that the summit can be a regular feature to educate Sierra Leoneans in the Diaspora about opportunities in their country and to encourage them to participate in socio economic development to provide wealth for the nation and employment opportunities for its people. A comprehensive database for Sierra Leoneans in

the Diaspora shall be maintained at the EISC and Home Coming Secretariat in USA.

## **MEDIUM TERM GOALS**

Mr. Chairman, following from the short-term goals, my Ministry 's medium term goals include:-

**a) Reorganizing the Ministry and producing a new organogram to reflect the national character of its decentralized operations**

In line with the Government 's vision of decentralization, my Ministry will be reorganized providing Regional Deputy Commissioners and thereby ensuring that experienced senior competent authority is available to address all issues of labour administration at regional level and also creating a competitive ground for succession to the position of Commissioner of Labour.

**b) Implementation of the Social Safety Net scheme**

Mr. Chairman, Ladies and Gentlemen, the Social Security Scheme, had the contributory aspect called NASSIT and the non-contributory aspect called the Social Safety Net, otherwise called (Social Assistance). With the success of NASSIT since its launching my Ministry's attention further focuses on the Social Safety Net, Work has been done on its implementation strategy that now awaits presentation of cabinet paper and thereafter to commence execution.

**c) Review of the Labour Laws to reflect current developments and standards in labour administration**

Many consultative meetings have been held by Tripartite Partners resulting in amendments that will result in final draft and eventually in a Legislation/Bill in Parliament:

- a) Industrial Relations Act
- b) Workers Compensation Act
- c) Employment Act

**d) Labour Education Programme**

From the experience so far gained especially those of recent history, my Ministry has identified the compelling need to provide public education opportunities to create understanding of labour Issues for any party, participating in the labour market in Sierra Leone with the object of achieving greater compliance and thereby promoting industrial peace. The project proposal is now with other stakeholders for their input.

**e) Setting up of Sierra Leone Association of Small and Medium Enterprise (SLASME)**

The private sector that should provide best opportunity for economic growth and employment expansion is split between the formal and informal sectors, the latter vastly predominating. SLASME, if approved, would assist in the development and transformation of many informal activities into formal activities with concomittant increase in employment. The concept paper for this is now with line Ministry from which we expect collaboration and partnership.

**f) Labour Farms Project as a labour intensive scheme**

Creation of jobs particularly for our youths and women in rural areas is at the heart of Government's strategy for socio-economic development and poverty alleviation. Noting that the potential for providing greatest number of jobs is in agricultural sector, the Labour Farm Project is intended to have at least 15 acres of farm in every chiefdom in the country where workers are paid decent wages to provide their labour, and proceeds from the harvests used to expand the scheme thereby creating more employment. It is expected the project would create about 10,000 jobs nationwide. It is further envisaged that such farms can provide opportunities for training in latest techniques in farming to local farmers, interest young people in farming and encourage agro-based businesses. The Social Safety Net Scheme by providing assistance for the needy can also benefit Mr. Chairman, Ladies and Gentlemen you would notice also that the project is in line with the philosophy of Food Security for all and

the Ministry shall effectively collaborate with the Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security in the execution of this project. The concept paper for this project is ready and active effort is now underway for funding.

**g)     Reactivation of the Joint National Board (JNB)**

Part of the socio-economic development of the working people requires that workers be safeguarded against remunerations akin to slave labour wages. The JNB, in consultation with Government and other stakeholders, would be required to come up with policy initiatives on national minimum wage annually. Putting such structure in place is a necessary contribution to poverty reduction strategy and occupies a central position in our medium goals.

**h)     Enhance the status of EISC in promotion of self-employment**

Micro credit/micro finance administration is a vital means of self-employment promotion. Study of the impact of such schemes in terms of self-employment and the development of enterprises resulting in an expertise to which the EISC is particularly suited. The EISC will be actively assisted in this endeavour to further create and develop opportunities for employment.

**i)     Formulation of a coherent and Integrated National Decent Employment policy and work plan**

Given the importance of employment as an issue, and the acknowledgement that many brilliant initiatives exist some of them not under the control of my Ministry, plans have been initiated to work closely with ILO for a National Employment policy. The nation will be apprised of that development from time to time.

**j)     HIV / AIDS programme for the work Place**

Mr Chairman, HIV/AIDS pandemic with its deleterious effect on people gives accent to the proverbial saying “Health is Wealth”. As it relates to the workplace workers need to be safeguarded against ill health, particularly against this monster disease so as not to affect their output that is so crucial for wealth creation and consequently socio-economic development. My Ministry

would not only vigorously embark on programmes about HIV/AIDS at the work place but it will actively urge employers to incorporate HIV/AIDS programmes in the Health and Safety Management Systems at their work places. My Ministry has commenced the necessary work for collaboration with ILO, Global Funds and our national HIV/AIDS co-ordinating unit SHARP to produce a work plan to give effect to the above policy initiatives.

### **LONG-TERM GOALS OF MINISTRY**

Mr Chairman, Ladies and Gentlemen, I would like you to appreciate that my Ministry is more a planning Ministry unlike other Ministries that are executing Ministries. What this means is that a lot of initiatives we produce for employment promotion become dependent on the collaboration of the appropriate implementing Ministries

Nevertheless, my Ministry, on a long-term basis, will engage itself in implementation of the comprehensive and integrated National Employment Policy which take into account all of the following important ends:

- 1) To pursue an active national policy and programme designed to promote and create jobs to enable the greatest number of Sierra Leoneans as possible to obtain permanent full-time, productive employment with adequate living wage. In addition, the Ministry shall work with development agencies to channel funds for development of projects to create jobs particularly for women, youths and the disabled.
- 2) To develop rural works programmes in order to provide jobs for the people who reside in rural communities where unemployment and underemployment levels remain high. The basic goal is to arrest the trend of rural-urban migration as well as ameliorate the working and living conditions of rural people who constitute the majority in the country's population. Along with this programme, the rural people should be educated on the importance of agriculture and the necessity to rise above subsistence agricultural activities.
- 3) Allied to the above is the orientation of society towards creation of self-employment, since most of the income earning opportunities are based on self-employment. Education and training should increasingly equip a large majority of Sierra Leoneans to be self-employed. To deal with this issue, my Ministry is considering the establishment of local planning bodies to design

self-employment programmes in which the common elements should be attitudinal reform, skills training, management training, accounting and so forth.

4) It is the aim of the Ministry to create the Youth Corp programme of employment in commercial agricultural farms for secondary school leavers to create interest in agriculture and agro- based businesses where the greatest number of job opportunities lie.

5) Expand and increase the quality of investment portfolio of NASSIT in line with national development aspirations

6) Continue to promote and maintain industrial peace through labour education Programs, social dialogue and Tripartism.

### **THE WAY FORWARD**

#### 1. On issue of constraints

a) as it relates to inadequate staff level, and mindful of the Government's own financial limitation, My Ministry, on completion of the new organogram would work in close collaboration with the office of the Establishment Secretary and the Ministry of Finance to agree on a phased increase in staff over a predetermined period until adequate level of staff is achieved

b) on the issue of transportation My Ministry will work with the Ministry of Transport and Communication and the Ministry of Finance to agree on a programme permitting us to retain certain proportion of revenue generated by my Ministry to go in acquiring vehicles and motorbikes

c) as it relates to equipment for use for factory inspection, similar arrangements as in b) with the Ministry of Finance will be pursued

2. On policy issues, I believe fervently, that in our indefatigable effort to strive for full employment, salvation lies in interesting the people of this country particular the youths in

a) agriculture and agro-board business. For the youths this requires that some form of National Youth Corp program for youths at school leaving age is vital. My Ministry will consult copiously with the Ministry of Youth \and

Sport and through them the Youth Organisations, and the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology to come up with something initially. for public debate

b) Providing support, including Government budgetary allocation, for the Employment Information Services Center (EISC) especially in the area of the Sierra Leone Association of Small and Medium Enterprises (SLASME) to be established soon; that would bring together micro enterprises or players in the informal sector, small and medium enterprises with Finance Institutions (banks and insurance companies) thereby advocating and creating a milieu where the needs of these businesses can be appreciated, understood and supported for their growth and expansion. By this means, a lot of the informal sector can be transformed into the formal sector, bolstering the private sector, the resultant effect being a stronger economy with the concomitant creation of more productive employment

c) Vigorously promoting NASSIT to all corners of Sierra Leone and endeavouring to achieve maximum compliance; and to prudently and actively invest its funds to enhance protection for contributors at time of need whilst making significant contribution to the national developmental efforts through choice of investment projects.

## **CONCLUSION**

To conclude, I hope this Fourth Presentation of the Symposium Paper has given a clear picture of my Ministry's efforts during the reporting period, our aspirations thereafter, as well as indications of the way forward

Mr. Chairman Distinguished Ladies, and Gentlemen I thank you all for attentively listening to the account of stewardship of my Ministry of Labour Social security and Industrial Relations. I am delighted to place on record also my profound gratitude to His Excellency, the President, Alhaji Dr Ahmed Tejan Kabbah for providing the opportunity to once again read this report – *for if he did not appoint me in this position it would have been some one else making a presentation on behalf of this Ministry.* Mr. Chairman, may I also extend my sincere thanks and profound appreciation to my Deputy and

members of staff of my Ministry, Board, Management and staff of NASSIT, who, in diverse ways, contributed towards the huge success we have recorded in the year's report.

I also appreciate very strongly

- \* the contributions of our Social Partners, the National and International Non Governmental Organizations and the line Ministries for their collaborative efforts throughout the year under review.
- \* financial support and technical assistance of several bilateral and multilateral institutions. In this regard, let me please make a mention of the ILO, ALARC, UNDP, AU in ensuring that the dream of the Ministry is realized

I thank you all.

Submitted please.

**A.O. Timbo**

Minister of Labour, Social  
Security and Industrial Relations