

4th State of the Nation Symposium
Atlantic Hall
National Stadium Complex
Brookfields
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Status Report: Ministry of Transport and Communications
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Communications

A. Background

1. Distinguished Guests, Members of the 4th Estate, Ladies and Gentlemen

I wish to express my appreciation to the Minister of Information for facilitating the hosting of this national symposium, which provides a forum for each Minister to account for the achievements, constraints and action plans of his/her Ministry

2. As we say in our local parlance, a lot of water has passed under the bridge since June, 2002 when I effectively took over this Ministry. My initial moves included the hosting of workshops at Lungi, Cline Town and Bo at which the principal stakeholders/decision makers under the Ministry presented their achievements, constraints and action plans for the future.
3. The deliberations were frank, informative and mostly innovative in the sense that the two hitherto mutually exclusive wings of my Ministry – viz – transport on the one hand, and Communications on the other, were brought together to freely exchange views and agree on complementary of efforts to enhance overall efficiency.

4. These deliberations were made on the basis of the perceived crucial intermediation role which my Ministry plays in the economic recovery and poverty alleviation efforts of the Government. You will all agree with me that while transportation facilitates and enhances the physical transfer of goods and services, communications accentuate such transfers. In effect, the two wings of the Ministry complement and reinforce each other, thereby ensuring proper coordination of efforts.

5. In recognition of the above, my Ministry's Mission Statement is as follows:

"to provide safe, reliable and affordable transport and Communications modes with the twin objectives of expediting economic recovery and poverty alleviation".

Restructuring of the MTC

6. Upon assumption of office last year, the Ministry adopted a policy of integrating the activities of the two wings with a view to ensuring compatibility in policies and objectives. This move was also aimed at minimizing bureaucratic bottlenecks and at removing petty obstacles to the smooth implementation of their development plans.

7. Consequently, as mentioned earlier, seminars were hosted at various locations (Lungi, SLPA – Cline Town and Bo) where issues of common interest and strategies were extensively discussed and action plans jointly agreed upon.

8. Although the establishment of the National Commission for Privatisation (NCP) has resulted in a complete reorientation of the activities of the MTC, it is still relevant to mention some of the major achievements of the Ministry before the National Commission for Privatisation came into existence. It is

essential to note also that the policy initiation and regulatory roles of the Ministry remain unaffected by the advent of the National Commission for Privatisation.

9. The three transport related parastatals – SLPA, SLAA and RTA – continued to benefit extensively from external funding (mainly from the World Bank). These institutions have undergone major physical and structural changes aimed at transforming them into modern and service – oriented enterprises. The evidence is there for all to see.

Sierra Leone Ports Authority (SLPA)

10. For example, at the SLPA, the following developmental programmes have been carried out:
 - rehabilitation of the container stacking area;
 - rehabilitation of the marine slipway at Cline Town;
 - paving of the access roads;
 - construction of a container shed at the mechanical section;
 - uplifting of the administrative building;
 - installation of a modern and state of the art Management Information System (MIS);
 - capacity building, both in-house and overseas;
 - purchase and installation of a new power generating plant; and
 - acquisition of new cargo handling equipment, donated by WFP.
11. As a desire to improve on the efficiency of the operation of Sierra Leone Ports Authority, plans are underway to privatise some of its activities, thereby making it a “landlord Port”. In this regard, the following areas are being earmarked:

- delinking of ferry services, port security, clinic, the marine slipway, etc, from the normal operations of the Ports;
 - restructuring of the Authority and downsizing it;
 - human resource development; and
 - procurement of modern equipment.
12. By way of both technical and policy support, my Ministry will endeavour to transform the Sierra Leone Ports Authority into a more viable, efficient and commercially oriented institution.

Sierra Leone Airports Authority (SLAA)

13. Tremendous efforts have been made, with the assistance of the World Bank, to modernize the operations of the Lungi International Airport, with the completion of the following projects:
- modification and expansion of the arrival hall;
 - the perimeter fencing;
 - purchase and commissioning of an 8,000 litre fire fighting vehicle;
 - runway pavement rehabilitation;
 - installation of runway edge lighting
 - modification and expansion of the departure hall;
 - installation of x-ray baggage screening equipment; and
 - installation of a race-track for baggage retrieval.
14. The above-mentioned investments have enhanced the operational capacity of the Authority and may soon lead to an International Civil Aviation Organisation (ICAO) reclassification. Further investment plans include the construction of a cargo handling complex, overlaying of the runway, widening of taxiway fillets, and the construction of a second runway.

The Road Transport Authority (RTA)

15. The Road Transport Authority (RTA) was created in 1996 to provide a regulatory framework for road transportation and to generate funds for road maintenance/repair. Over the period under review the Authority has collected and transferred a total of 4.8 billion leones to the road fund.
16. In addition to this commendable achievement, the Road Transport Authority has also undertaken the following measures as per its mandate:
 - promotion of private sector participation in vehicle repair and maintenance;
 - provision of training for transport operatives;
 - establishment of a data bank for drivers licences and vehicle registration; and
 - introduction of a vehicle identification certificate.
 - The centralization of licensing of vehicles and drivers and the testing of vehicles for roadworthiness in Bo, Kenema and Makeni.
17. In an attempt to complement the efforts of the police, the Authority has submitted the draft regulations pertaining to the enforcement of road traffic laws for the consideration of my Ministry. This would lead to revision of the Road Traffic Act and Regulations accordingly. Subsequent to passing into law by Parliament an act on the introduction of Road Traffic Wardens, the Road Transport Authority is now on the verge of completing arrangements for employing Traffic Wardens to complement the Police.
18. Furthermore, the Government in its desire to enhance safety on the roads has introduced measures whereby vehicles are charged higher taxes in direct relation to their age. This policy is geared towards discouraging the importation of derelict vehicles on to our shores.

The Road Transport Corporation (RTC)

- 19 The Road Transport Corporation in particular has been adversely affected by the civil conflict in Sierra Leone. In addition to the burning and looting of its buses, all of the profitable routes became inaccessible. Even in the face of dwindling revenue, the Corporation could not, because of social reasons, reduce its staff, thereby, imposing considerable financial strains on itself. The situation recently boiled over, culminating in strike action resulting to Government setting up a committee to investigate workers grievances, the genesis of the present status of the Corporation and to make its recommendations to Government. The Committee's report will soon be presented to Cabinet for prompt action.

- 20 I must however state here that the fortunes of the Corporation will start to improve with the arrival of the seventeen new buses and ten freight trucks Government has procured. These will reinforce Government's desire to facilitate public transportation and freight of agricultural tools and equipment to farmers and to evacuate their produce at affordable costs.

- 21 I am pleased to inform the audience that Government has extended the School Bus Programme to the Provinces starting with the Provincial Headquarter Towns of Bo, Kenema and Makeni. Each of these towns will have two buses that would be managed by a Committee of prominent people in the township, in consonance with Government's policy of decentralization. More buses are now available and will be donated to students of tertiary institutions, come October this year, as a measure taken by Government to alleviate their transportation problems.

- 22 My Ministry has embarked on a programme of bringing back sanity in the operations of lorry and car parks nationwide. In this regard Government has ordered that

all lorry and car parks should now be run by City and Town Councils, thus putting to a stop excesses of unscrupulous persons illegally claiming ownership of these parks and levying heavy charges on drivers and vehicle owners resulting in inconveniences and hardship for the traveling masses and the public in general. My Ministry solicits the cooperation of the general public in bringing this programme to a success.

Sierra National Airlines (SNA)

- 23 The operation of the Sierra National Airlines (SNA) has not been anything to be proud of. As a consequence of this Government had to contract a management team to superintend the activities of the Company and to explore ways of revitalizing its operations. With the efforts of this team, the Company has managed to maintain its international service in partnership with various Companies overseas. With their various overseas partnership arrangements Management has been able to maintain two weekly flights. Passenger traffic on the London – Freetown – London route for the month of December , 2002 showed record reservation of over 2000 passengers.
- 24 However inspite of the above there is much room for improvement in quality, timeliness and service delivery mechanisms. The Ministry in conjunction with other stakeholders will be implementing the following measures:

- * Seeking the services of an agency that will
 - (a) position aircraft in Sierra Leone to cover regional and international routes for hire;
 - (b) establish an aircraft maintenance and repair center which will cater for the maintenance and repair of SNA Aircraft and other possible users on a commercial basis;

(c) train Sierra Leoneans in aircraft maintenance and repairs.

- 25 All of the above is in pursuit of Government's commitment to liberalise air transport in conformity with the Yamoussoukro declaration.
- Sierra Leone National Shipping Company (SLNSC)**
- 26 The Sierra Leone National Shipping Company (SLNSC) has also had a chequered history since its creation in June, 1972. It was originally designed to perform the following functions:
- Ship's Agency;
 - Cargo clearing and forwarding; and
 - Stevedoring and ship's ownership.
- 27 Management of the Company has changed hands several times with no marked improvement in its operations and profitability. This has inevitably resulted in the loss of important shipping partners and a corresponding lack of confidence in the operational reliability and efficiency of the Company.
- 28 My Ministry is of the view that a parastatal like the Sierra Leone National Shipping Company should not be satisfied with merely being able to cover its overheads and taxes. It was established to generate revenue for the government and people of Sierra Leone. Failure to do so therefore negates the basic principles and assumptions underlying its creation.
- 29 Fortunately, Sierra Leone National Shipping Company is a prime candidate for privatization. Meanwhile however, the Company has introduced measures to help diversify its revenue generation capabilities. These include embarking upon airfreight, packing and haulage which have positively impacted on the revenue generating capability of the institution. There are plans also to increase the haulage capacity to meet the needs of its numerous customers.

Sierra Leone Maritime Administration (SLMA)

- 30 The Sierra Leone Maritime Administration (SLMA) was established by the Government of Sierra Leone to fill the void created by the absence of a central coordinating and regulatory body for maritime activities in Sierra Leone. Prior to its establishment, maritime activities were performed in a segmented manner by several agencies including the Sierra Leone Ports Authority and the Ministry of Transport and Communications, leading to innumerable problems associated with safety of life at sea.
- 31 The agency is charged with the following functions under the guidance of my Ministry:
- registration of ships;
 - maritime personnel certification;
 - training and recruitment of sea going personnel;
 - protection of the marine environment;
 - safety of navigation in waters under our jurisdiction;
 - flag state and port state controls;
 - maritime search and rescue; and
 - regulation of shipping in inland waterways.
- 31 With reference to the registration of ships in particular the Act empowers the Ministry to superintend the entire process. Consequently the Ministry has contacted the International Maritime Organisation (IMO) for technical assistance to identify the modalities that will ultimately lead to establishing a ship's registry.
- 33 Since its establishment, the following conventions and protocols have been acceded to:

- 1992 CLC Protocol and 1992 Fund Protocol and denunciation of 1969 CLC and 1971 Fund;
- IMO Amendment 91;
- IMO Amendment 93;
- **Solas Protocol 88;**
- **Load lines protocol 88;**
- The International Convention on Tonnage Measurement of Ships (Tonnage 69);
- The convention on the International Regulations for Preventing Collision at Sea 1972 (Colreg 72);
- **The International Convention for the Prevention of Pollution from Ships, as modified by the Protocol of 1978 relating thereto (Marpol 73/78 Annex I & II);**
- International Convention on Salvage 1989 (Salvage 89);
- International Convention on Limitation of Liability for Maritime Claims 1976 (LLMC 76) and the Protocol of 1996 relating therefore.

34 In order to enhance safety within the maritime industry Sierra Leone Maritime Administration have taken the following measures:

(a) Conducting sensitization tours to riverine communities including the following:

Gbondapi
 Gbangbatoke
 Shenge
 Mattru Jong
 Lungi
 Tagrin
 Mambolo
 Katema
 Kychom
 Yeliboya
 Tombowala
 Rokupr

- (b) Government is finalizing arrangements to provide navigational aids, including marker buoys;
- © During the sensitization tour the Sierra Leone Maritime Administration distributed life jackets to boat owners engaged in sea transportation on higher purchase for one year at an average cost of Le5,000.00 per life jacket per month. SLMA has also employed maritime traffic monitors together with wharf superintends who now work in concert with the Sierra Leone Marine Police with a view to policing the waters.
- (d) In conjunction with the International Maritime Organisation (IMO) the maritime administration has undertaken the following consultancy studies:
 - (i) Port reception facilities
 - ii) Marine pollution combating and prevention
 - (iii) Search and rescue operations between Sierra Leone and Guinea and in September of this year two consultants will be undertaking a port security assessment needs to meet international standards and requirements for port security. When these studies would have been concluded and the recommendations implemented, they will greatly help in the prevention of marine pollution, enhance Port security and expedite the provision of reception facilities.
- (e) Construction of a jetty at Pepel has been completed while that at Bonthe is at an advanced stage. Meanwhile the EU have agreed to fund detailed engineering designed studies for 8 additional jetties;

- (f) The Kissy Oil Jetty which is used primarily for receiving petrol and other petroleum products will soon be undergoing major rehabilitation. Tender documents have been prepared and the tender process is ongoing.
 - (g) Meanwhile 20 additional landing sites have been identified which are as a result of population dynamics;
 - (h) My Ministry has succeeded in getting the World Bank to fund an institutional and financial study of the Sierra Leone Maritime Administration with a view to establishing the restructuring requirements and its investments needs;
 - (i) In the meantime, arrangements are ongoing to appoint a Deputy Executive Director to enhance the operational efficiency of the institution.
- 35 In view of the importance the Government of Sierra Leone attaches to the role of the SLMA, the International Maritime Organisation (IMO), on request by Government, had sent two consultants to conduct research on both search and rescue operations on the sea route between the Republic of Sierra Leone and the Republic of Guinea. As soon as the reports are out the two countries will work out modalities in terms of providing joint search and rescue operations for sea accidents in the territorial waters of both countries.
- 36 Meanwhile, a Merchant Shipping Act has been ratified by Parliament. The Act provides sufficient control and monitoring mechanisms to regulate shipping generally, and to safeguard the interest of Master Mariners. It will also ensure that revenue generated from the marine environment is passed on to Government.

Telecommunications

- 37 As you may be aware Telecommunication is in transition from public to private and monopoly to competition. Nevertheless it is incumbent on our Ministry that the provision of the telecommunication services be undertaken in such a way that it will be affordable, reliable and acceptable and will not be a debilitating factor on especially the rural poor. In particular the Ministry is in the process of setting up a mechanism to draw up a pricing formula in conjunction with the operators to meet the above objective. In addition the principle of “any to any” regarding interconnections will be strictly and religiously enforced. This is a major basis for fair competition.

SIERRATEL (The Incumbent)

- 38 SIERRATEL was one of the Government owned Parastatals that suffered most by the rebel war. This devastation coupled with maladministration had resulted in the Company’s operations falling short of public expectation.
- 39 However, there has been moves to revamp the operations of the Company. The replacement of the local distributing network in the Central Business District (CBD) of Freetown commenced in the year 2001 after the delivery of external plant materials that were ordered in the year 2000. When the work is completed this year a new network of 20,000 lines would have been installed to replace a network of 10,000 lines installed in the 60’s. This would lead to a drastic reduction in the number of faults affecting customer’s lines in the CBD area.
- 40 The rehabilitation of the telecommunications infrastructure

in the country continued last year with the construction of new exchange buildings in Cline Town and Lungi and repair of buildings and equipment in the provinces.

- 41 The installation of a new exchange in Lungi was delayed due to unforeseen problems caused by the long storage of the equipment in Lungi.

Liberalization/Other Services

- 42 In order to ensure a more efficient and affordable telecommunications services to the nation, Government has liberalized the industry. As a result of this my Ministry has issued licences to operate VSAT, Wireless Loop, GSM Internet Service etc. There are now two GSM Mobile Phone Operators with one Company using AMPS Standard. It is hoped that more operators will soon enter the market which will be to the advantage of the users. As a matter of policy, my Ministry will now ensure that a planned coverage of operation in the Provinces is a condition for granting license to any telecommunications operator. Along this line the Ministry is pleased to announce that the leading mobile phone company CELTEL, has commenced operations in Makeni and Kono, in addition to existing facilities in Bo, Kenema, Moyamba and Freetown.
- 43 Telecommunications has now been generally recognized as a social service. In pursuit of this the Ministry has embarked on a policy of ensuring universal accessibility and service. Consequently the Ministry has granted a provisional licence to PLC Holdings for rural telephony to provide rural communications at affordable cost.
- 44 At the international level 2 new gateways have been granted to CELTEL and Millicom with the aim of improving quality and ensuring availability at affordable prices.
- 45 The introduction of competition in telecommunications

industry in the country and the pending privatization of Sierratel have created the need for a Regulatory Body in the Sector. The Ministry is now working on the introduction of a Telecommunications Act that would, among other things, update the laws in this sector and make provision for the establishment of the Regulatory Body.

- 46 The operations of mobile telephone systems have had a remarkable impact on socio-economic and cultural interactions, enhanced security, improved governance, facilitated national cohesion and expedited poverty alleviation.

Sierra Leone Postal Services (SALPOST)

- 47 SALPOST was created to provide postal services at affordable cost to Sierra Leoneans, thereby necessitating location of Post Offices in each town and village countrywide. Over the years however, the operations of SALPOST have been adversely affected by both the 10-year conflict and mismanagement.
- 48 However as the rebel war becomes a thing of the past, and more importantly following the dissolution of the former Board of Directors coupled with the sending of the then Management on leave, the new Board of directors now directing the affairs of SALPOST is trying to put bits and pieces together to raise this Company from the ashes of war to its former glory. Since assumption of office by the new Board, there seems to be some light at the end of the tunnel as the Acting Management under the direct supervision of the Board has been able to reactivate and revitalize the activities of the Post.
- 49 Cognisant of the fact that we are now living in a dynamic, electronic and fast moving world, the new Board had thought it prudent to diversify the operations of SALPOST in a bid to cope with developments taking place elsewhere in the world. Consequently, the first major activity that the Board directed Management to undertake

was to make use of the computers that had been donated to SALPOST. The computers about eight for a start were upgraded and a Computer School was opened on 22nd July 2001 with student enrolment at 21, running two sessions per day.

- 50 Another impressive venture that the Board directed Management to undertake was the introduction of International Director Dialing lines – IDD. Two IDD lines and the local line have been put in place and this facility is attracting a lot of customers making both local and international calls. Encouraged by the large number of customers making calls on daily basis, the Board has conceived an idea of introducing an Internet Café facility. An e-mail box has been secured as a stepping-stone towards the opening of the above facility.
- 51 In respect of the above therefore, a project proposal has been prepared for onward transmission to the authorities at the International Government Philatelic Corporation – IGPC in Switzerland. We are sure that before the end of 2003 the dream of having an Internet Café would have been realized.
- 52 Photocopying facilities are among the projects which were launched at SALPOST in July 2001. There are three of these machines in use at the moment, two in Freetown at the General Post Office and one in Kenema. Plans are underway to procure more for use in areas that are in need for such facilities. A 40KVA Perkins standby generator has been bought for continuous power supply to the projects and some operational areas in case of power cut from National Power Authority (NPA).
- 53 At the SALPOST Savings Bank, investment is on the increase. Plans are underway to also diversify the operations of the Bank to include more commercial activities like Foreign Exchange transactions and Advances etc. It is hoped that these activities will be supervised and regulated by the Central Bank.

Meteorological Department

- 54 The functions of this Department include the provision of weather information and dissemination in the form of forecast to farmers, seafarers, shipping agencies, aviation, engineers, tourists, mining industries and the general public.
- 55 In spite of the massive destruction done to the facilities of This department during the civil unrest, the following major strides have been achieved:
- Major rehabilitation works have been done to several offices and installation in the Western Area as well as in the Provinces.
 - However, investment in equipment to enhance the weather forecasting ability of the institution is required including computers and forecasting instrument. Once this is done, the Department will play the role it has been created to perform, efficiently and in a timely manner.

Civil Aviation Department

- 56 The Consultants, Booz Allen and Hamilton, have submitted their final report on aviation study in Sierra Leone. This report has been approved by Cabinet and forwarded to the Office of the Attorney General for the drafting of the necessary legislation to establish a Civil Aviation Authority. This project when completed will pave the way for a more attractive and cost-effective Civil Aviation sector in Sierra Leone.

THE COORDINATION AND MONITORING UNIT

- 57 A comprehensive approach to transport infrastructure development provides a framework for policy makers to gain a broad perspective on infrastructure needs and their relation to the overall development process. In addition, inclusion of a component for each sector in a single project provides a forum for communication, facilitates monitoring and evaluation, and allows for flexibility in the allocation of funds.
- 58 The achievement of the above however requires a set of operational management procedures and responsibilities, tailored to this situation and the necessary resources for management and coordination, as well as sector-specific supervision.
- 59 This was the rationale behind the setting up of the Coordination and Monitoring Unit in January, 1997. The Unit is charged with the responsibility for project technical and financial management including the preparation of annual financial statements, in accordance with internationally accepted accounting practices. It also monitors all disbursements made under the Transport Sector Project Credit to ensure conformity with World Bank requirements.
- 60 The Coordination and Monitoring Unit's role in the Ministry is technical, advisory and supervisory. It has been coordinating the Transport Sector Project and other donor interactions in the sector. It possesses expertise in transport economics, financial management, environmental impact assessment, statistical data analysis and monitoring and evaluation.
- 61 Since its inception in 1997, the Coordination and Monitoring Unit has successfully supervised the rehabilitation of the Sierra Leone Ports Authority, Sierra Leone Airports Authority, major trunk ,gravel and city roads, and helped to create the Road Transport Authority

and the Sierra Leone Maritime Administration. It has also drafted a National Transport Policy and Investment Plan (2003-2007) which has developed an outgrowth in the Proposed Infrastructure Development Project (IDP).

- 62 The Infrastructure Development Project will contribute to the National Recovery and Poverty Reduction Strategies of Government through improved access to essential infrastructure services (transport, water and sanitation). This will be accomplished through the rehabilitation or strengthening of services, as well as strengthening institutional capabilities to plan and sustainably manage and maintain these services. The Infrastructure Development Project will provide funds for targeted priority investments with the aim of establishing a sustainable core of infrastructure services that will contribute to poverty reduction and facilitate economic growth. All of this will be pursued within the context of ongoing programs for decentralization and privatization.
- 63 The Coordination and Monitoring Unit will therefore continue to play a major intermediation role during the implementation of the Infrastructure Development Project.
- 64 Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen, thank you for your attention.