

**A STATEMENT BY HIS EXCELLENCY THE PRESIDENT ALHAJI DR. AHMAD  
TEJAN KABBAH  
MADE BEFORE THE TRUTH AND RECONCILIATION COMMISSION ON  
TUESDAY 5TH AUGUST, 2003**

Mr. Chairman and members of the Commission, I am delighted to have been invited to make a statement at these public hearings of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, particularly on the theme "Promoting Reconciliation and National Reintegration". In dealing with this theme, I take the view that it will be useful if I put within its proper historical perspective the situation prevailing in Sierra Leone, which makes the promotion of reconciliation and national reintegration an active and necessary element of State Policy.

**INTRODUCTION**

1. The peace achieved at the end of the eleven years of war in this country can be sustained only if there is reconciliation among the people and if national reintegration is actively and successfully pursued. Thus reconciliation and national reintegration are necessary ingredients in the peace building process which we need to embark upon in order to avoid the recurrence of war. Therefore to promote reconciliation and national reintegration we need to understand what were the root causes of the war itself and how those root causes are to be eradicated for good. It is for this reason that I have deemed it necessary to take the Commission back to an appropriate point in the history of this country to narrate the events and elements which, in my view cumulatively gave rise to the war. It is also important to narrate the role played by some of the actors in that war, and how they subscribed to the causes of the war or to the war itself. I will proffer no justification or explanation here for the conduct of any of the actors because there is no justification that can be found for their conduct. My concern here is merely to state the facts that occurred as a matter of history and the role my Government has played and continues to play not only to ensure that peace returns to the country but also to put in place measures to prevent another war, promote reconciliation and national reintegration.

2. Sierra Leone became independent from Britain on the 27th April, 1961. At that time and for some years thereafter good governance and the rule of law prevailed. Multi-party Government and democracy were the two systems bequeathed to this country. Both systems were valued and held in high esteem by the population until the advent of the APC Government in 1968. That Government from its inception systematically dismantled those two systems up to a point that not even a shadow of them remained. Thus for a period covering nearly three decades what prevailed in Sierra Leone was a one-party totalitarian form of Government starting as a de facto one party government in 1968 until it was formalized by the One Party Constitution of 1978 which remained in force up to 1991. The consequence was the disenchantment of the population with the state and the organs of government, the pervasiveness of bad governance and the total lack of accountability by public officers. Such public officers by and large held office by virtue of their membership of the only recognized party (the APC) or as a favour from that party which they regarded as their duty to serve if they were to retain their positions. The party in this situation became preoccupied with its own survival and for this reason it would not tolerate any dissent or opposition which it crushed by brutal force. What follows now will give details of what I regard as factors which cumulatively gave rise to the war.

3. Multi-Party political system continued to be practiced in Sierra Leone for some years even after Independence in 1961. After the controversial election of 1967 and the intervening one-year of military rule in 1967/68, the All People's

Congress (APC) Party took over the Government from the Sierra Leone People's Party (SLPP) in 1968. By diverse and often questionable constitutional amendments, Sierra Leone was transformed from a monarchical democratic system of Government to a Republic in 1971, with a Ceremonial President, which, within less than 24 hours, was again changed to an Executive Presidential Government. By various electoral manipulations at bye-elections following successful election petitions filed by the A.P.C. Party against the SLPP and other devices such as the use of thugs and the rigging of those bye elections. From 1968 Sierra Leone as already mentioned became a de facto One Party State. By formalizing the one-party system in the 1978 Constitution the APC Party became the sole political party. The membership of that Party then became a necessary pre-condition for the participation by any person in the political life and indeed in the governance of this country. This was the situation that prevailed up to 1991 when the Government was obliged reluctantly to yield to popular outcry for the return to political pluralism. This resulted in the promulgation of the 1991 Constitution. A number of political parties including the SLPP and the People's Democratic Party (PDP) were registered in that year in readiness for the elections, which were to be held in 1992.

4. It needs to be mentioned here that sometime in 1966, Sir Albert Margai who had succeeded Sir Milton Margai as Prime Minister and leader of the SLPP, in 1964 proposed the introduction of a one party system of government. Because of the opposition received from all and sundry especially from the A.P.C. Party to any change from the multi-party democratic system of government, Sir Albert dropped the idea of a one party system and nothing was heard about it again until in 1978 when that system was formally introduced by the APC Government. By the promulgation of a multi-party Constitution in 1991 the APC Party was merely grudgingly making good what it had formally deprived the country of for close to two decades.

#### **THE A.P.C. PARTY'S ATTITUDE TO THE 1991 CONSTITUTION AND ITS DESIRE TO RETAIN ITS GRIP ON POWER AT ALL COSTS**

5. The restoration of the 1991 multi-party Constitution resulted in the registration of a number of political parties, and with this the A.P.C. Party, which had been in office since 1968 felt its position threatened. A number of its previous supporters had reverted to the SLPP to which they originally belonged or had joined the PDP. So much for the state of affairs up to and immediately after 1991.

6. The rebel war in neighbouring Liberia had commenced in 1989 with the express objective of removing President Samuel Doe from office in that country. Charles Taylor, the current President of Liberia had come to Sierra Leone with the view of using this country as a springboard for staging a rebellion against Doe. The APC first received him and even encouraged him to do so. This initial encouragement for Charles Taylor, we are told, was as a result of some financial consideration paid by him to the higher echelons of the APC regime. The APC Government then failed to keep to its own part of the bargain. It had a change of heart and had Charles Taylor arrested, incarcerated at the Pademba Road Prisons for a while and then expelled from the country. This conduct by the APC regime is a factor that might have provoked the hostility of Charles Taylor and his active participation in the rebel war in Sierra Leone. He is known to have organized and sponsored the initial invasion into Sierra Leone by arming and directing the invaders and his support for them remained active all throughout the rebel war.

7. There is no attempt here to justify the attitude of Charles Taylor and the stance he took against the people of this country. But a salutary lesson can be

learnt from the relationship that was forged between the APC Government then and this man and the transaction or deal that is imputed to have transpired between the two. That lesson is that matters of State should be embarked upon with greater caution and circumspection and the receipt of personal gain should never determine how important matters of State should be decided. It would have been quite proper for the then APC Government to have declined to allow Charles Taylor the use of Sierra Leone territory for hostile activity against a sister country such as Liberia. But the impropriety lay in first accepting such use and for a consideration, and then reneging on it. This country and its people have paid most dearly and are still paying for such improper conduct of the APC Government.

8. The rebel war in Sierra Leone commenced in March 1991, and the multi-party Constitution of 1991 became effective in October of that year. With the registration of a number of political parties under that Constitution and with the threat perceived by the APC to its position which for the first time became assailable and the real prospect of its losing the elections slated for 1992 under that Constitution, the APC Party began devising strategies to guarantee its continued grip on power. Some of those strategies were to wage war against Liberia not for the purpose of staving off the rebel incursion but in order to provide a justification for not holding the scheduled 1992 elections. Other strategies the APC Party considered adopting were either to use the war then in progress as a pretext for declaring a state of emergency and for establishing an interim government. This would necessarily have resulted in postponing the elections. A reserved strategy which that Party was adept in implementing was, in the event that those elections could not be postponed, to embark on the extensive use of public funds to rig the scheduled elections in its favour. In other words, even though there had been a serious incursion into Sierra Leone's territory, the only preoccupation of the A.P.C. Government was to retain political power. Thus, after October 1991, the APC Party was determined to embark upon any measures, which would result in the elections proposed for 1992 to be postponed indefinitely and thus frustrate the desire of the people for a smooth political change and for a restoration of normal democratic multi-party governance in this country after a dearth of more than two decades.

9. The modalities for giving effect to the scheme hatched by the APC Party were debated at length at one of the high level meetings of that Party held at their Office and under the Chairmanship of the then Inspector-General of Police, the late Mr. Bambay Kamara. I quote here verbatim and in extenso excerpts from the Minutes of that meeting which I had since come by:

Speaker AA:  
The state of emergency will not solve the problem either, but to declare war against Liberia. Registration of P.D.P. has brought untold confusion in the Party. We have lost most of our thugs to P.D.P. and other Parties. SLPP would have been no threat to A.P.C. They are mild people or Party. PDP has given SLPP minds to face us...

Speaker BB:  
Chairman... About the state of emergency, Haja solemnly appeal to Chairman and A.P.C. to see that it goes through. It will be total destruction to A.P.C. survival if it fails. This is a big test.

Speaker CC.:  
Let us address ourselves seriously to the formation of interim government. You are bound by law to include opposition members in policy-making cabinet. They

would want to know how much we have got for the war and how much spent. The country's budget must be known. These are the monies we depend on to rig the elections and to make anything necessary to bring victory. How can we do these effectively if we have these oppositions among us?

Speaker

DD.:

I wholeheartedly agree with the 1st Speaker Haja. Indeed we have lost almost all our thugs and supporters to P.D.P. Thaimu knows us better than any of the parties. We have to exercise patience to destroy P.D.P. For SLPP is no threat to A.P.C. in any form. They cannot stand tensions and thugs.

Speaker

EE:

APC is at a crucial point since we are not accountable to anybody now. Let us use the war front funds and national funds to persuade Honourable Members to vote in favour of counter motion as Honourable Sankoh is going to withdraw his private motion. We cannot afford to lose any steps now..."

10. I have decided here not to disclose the identity and names of those present at that meeting and the speakers because a number of them are now chastened and are currently engaged in activities beneficial to the governance of this country. No useful purpose will be served by disclosing their identity as this will only cause them embarrassment and the withdrawal by them of their services. But if the Commission is desirous to know the identity of these persons, I am prepared to disclose their names in confidence.

11. I have attempted here to give the Commission an idea of the state of affairs which prevailed in the body politic of this country in the run-up to the proposed elections of 1992, which was aborted by the NPRC coup d'etat of that year. This gives an idea of the level to which the APC Party was prepared to go to satisfy its greed for power and to do so even if it meant endangering the security of this nation by plunging it into a war not as a defensive measure but for the purpose of retaining power. It also gives a glimpse of the frame of mind and attitude of the ruling A.P.C. Government not only towards the proposed democratic elections, but more so and naturally towards the junta which ousted them, and towards my Government which succeeded them after the elections of 1996. In other words, my success at the elections of that year was not a matter the A.P.C. Party was willing to accept lightly. From the foregoing it is therefore reasonable to infer that the defeated A.P.C. Party was even prepared to be involved in machinations to cause problems for my government even if this meant creating further chaos in the country. This in fact turned out to be the case. Hence, the obvious hostility shown by that Party to my Government and the refusal of its leadership to accept my invitation to participate in the broad based national government, which I formed after the 1996 elections.

12. I have given this account not with any intention of casting aspersions on the A.P.C. Party, but merely to describe the political situation in this country at the time I became President, and the course of events that followed thereafter some of whose repercussions are still haunting us. To achieve national reconciliation we need to take due cognisance of these events and to prevent their recurring so that the appropriate atmosphere can exist for national reconciliation.

#### **THE SECURITY SITUATION PREVAILING IN SIERRA LEONE BEFORE MY ELECTION AS PRESIDENT.**

13. The account following will give the Commission and idea of the prevailing precarious security position in the country at the time I first assumed office as President.

1. (a) Before I became President in March 1996, the RUF had already entrenched themselves in the war for close to five years both in combat and in their international contacts. They then continued to have active support principally from Liberia, Burkina Fasso, and had haven in Ivory Coast.
2. (b) The Sierra Leone Military Forces were then unwilling and/or Unable to confront and engage the RUF in combat. On the contrary, there was clear evidence that their loyalty had been compromised to the extent that the civilian population had lost confidence in them, and because of their perceived collaboration with the rebels, they were nicknamed "sobels". This was a word coined from the words "soldiers" and "rebels" to emphasize the level of collaboration between the soldiers and the rebels.
3. (c) Because of the long stream of successes in combat by the RUF, their anticipation of actually taking over the Government of the entire country had been heightened. They were therefore vehemently opposed to whatever or whomever they saw as standing in their way to power. It was in this light that they perceived the democratic process that was emerging towards the end of 1995 and the beginning of 1996. Similarly the RUF considered all politicians participating in the election process as real enemies attempting to thwart their imminent occupation of the entire country.

#### **DECLARED RESOLVE TO RESTORE PEACE TO SIERRA LEONE AND THE OBSTACLES**

14. When I became President, I was very conscious of my political, constitutional and perhaps even moral obligation to strive hard and exert every effort to bring an early end to the war. The reasons for this were obvious.

1. (a) The population had already become war-weary, and in spite of my knowledge of the state of the military and its inability or unwillingness to prosecute the war against the rebels, I had made the ending of the war my main campaign pledge. I made this pledge in the belief that by negotiations and sound reasoning I would be able to talk the rebels out of their hostile activities against the population, persuade them to enter into negotiations with the view of concluding a peace agreement with them.
2. I reasonably perhaps, had the belief that if they signed any agreement they would see themselves obliged to abide by their signatures.
3. (b) I was also convinced that with a civilian government other than the APC in power, the original stated rationale for the RUF taking up arms would have been eliminated and my new civilian government would be able to persuade them to lay down their arms. This conviction was based on the fact that the RUF had repeatedly stated that they embarked on armed struggle in order to oust the APC Government from power and to liberate the people of Sierra Leone from the perceived tyranny and corruption of that Government.
4. (c) On my assumption of office in 1996, I was quite conscious that the military had been for long completely politicized by the previous civilian regime and that by their having been in power for over four years immediately before my election to office the same military had cherished the fact of having political power which they had used mainly to accumulate wealth. I was therefore aware that they would not be inclined to be loyal to my Government in the first place and would also detest to

give up power easily and completely. The NPRC military junta clearly demonstrated this attitude by their conduct as they grudgingly yielded to the holding of the elections only after persistent outcry from the civil population and pressure from the international community for the elections to be held. They unsuccessfully mounted and orchestrated a campaign for "peace before elections" which was another way of perpetuating the junta in office. Through this campaign they even attempted to ingratiate themselves with the RUF by demonstrating to the RUF that the junta was prepared to delay the holding of elections so that it would forge a power sharing arrangement with the RUF, but that the problem was with the political parties as they were pressing for the holding of elections for the purpose of permanently excluding the RUF from participating in the governance of the country. In order to convince the population that "peace before elections" was a viable proposition, and in order to demonstrate to the RUF that the junta was sincere about its desire to bring the rebels into the Government, the NPRC organized a hastily arranged peace meeting with the RUF in Yamoussoukro, Ivory Coast just before the date of the elections and the continuation of the meeting was adjourned to a date after the stated date for the elections.

5. (d) Again in order to prove its point that elections could not be held successfully before peace was achieved, the junta orchestrated acts of terror and intimidation of the electorate in several parts of the country just before and during the conduct of the elections so as to cow the population down to give up the idea of holding or continuing with the elections. Of course, the prospect held out to the RUF by the military junta that the RUF had better chances of participating in government if the junta remained in office and elections postponed further heightened the expectation of the rebels of actually taking over the entire government, having regard to their successes over the military and the internal weaknesses in the military itself. In spite of all these, and because of the resolve and determination of the population, the elections were held in February/March 1996 and I became President of Sierra Leone as a result.

#### MY IMMEDIATE CONCERNS ON ASSUMPTION OF OFFICE AS PRESIDENT:

15. On assuming office, I was quite clear in my mind as to what needed to be done immediately -

1. (a) I was anxious to fulfil my election promise to end the war and to restore peace to this country. This was a near obsession for me not just because it was a political undertaking which I had made but also because I was conscious that the country needed peace, and the population was war weary and was yearning for peace. I knew that the loyalty of the military or of what remained of it could not be guaranteed to prosecute the war against the rebels successfully; I was determined to bring to an end the long fratricidal war in order to prevent the further killings of Sierra Leoneans by Sierra Leoneans on either side. The only option I saw available to me then was to embark on negotiations with the rebels. This I did immediately after my inauguration. The opportunity for my first meeting with the RUF was afforded by their continued presence in Yamoussoukro, Ivory Coast, waiting for the adjourned meeting with the junta leaders there.
2. (b) I knew that I had to convince the RUF that in spite of their misgivings, their situation would be better by their agreeing to negotiate peace with me than with the military junta as I was the elected leader and representative of the people of Sierra Leone and therefore the only person with authority to negotiate peace terms then agreeable to the people of

Sierra Leone. Of course, the initial reaction of the RUF and their reception of me was hostile as they regarded me as a stumbling block. They thought I and the other politicians had insisted on the holding of the elections as a deliberate device to frustrate their ambition of participating in the government and eventually their taking it over - a prospect which they considered as real if the junta had remained in office and the elections had been postponed under the slogan "peace before elections". In the view of the RUF, my Government would use the Constitution, constitutional arguments and the issues of legality to frustrate their ambition. Therefore, only very grudgingly did they agree with me on an initial shaky cease-fire in anticipation of full-scale peace talks between them and the Government.

3. (c) I knew I had to extract from the military or whatever had remained of it some element of loyalty for my Government and a sense of Patriotism. This was necessary because I needed their loyalty and support in any event. I never deceived myself that this was an easily achievable enterprise, but it was an enterprise I had to embark upon. I therefore appointed the leadership of the Army with due diligence and after consultations and advice from appropriate sources.
4. (d) While pursuing the peace process, I was also aware that the people were anxious not only to have peace but also to begin to realize concrete dividends from the restoration of a democratic government which they had obtained, after much toil and suffering. Therefore, my government from its inception had pursued the search for peace and at the same time embarked upon measures for the rehabilitation and reconstruction of this war-torn country and its economy. Because of my relative success with this two-pronged approach, I was able to retain the patience of the population and their cooperation and support as they demonstrated at the elections of 2002.

### **The Peace Process in Sierra Leone**

16. It will be useful to discuss at this juncture, the process which I refer to here as the Peace Process covering the period April 1996 to January 2002. This was a most crucial period in the history of this country. It marked the heightened atrocities of the rebels which threatened the very survival of the nation, the attempts by my Government to bring an end to the war, the initial indifference of the international community to the plight and suffering of the people of Sierra Leone until so much lives were lost and property destroyed, the valiant determination of the people not only to rid themselves of the scourge of the rebel war but to restore their dignity and to determine their own future in a democratic manner and finally the realization of the international community that this country and its people deserved to be helped and saved, which realization resulted in the deployment of the largest ever U.N. Peace Keeping Force of over 17,000 troops in any one country.

### **The Abidjan Accord 1996**

17. As already stated, my Government had just been elected in March 1996. Just after this, we rushed into negotiations with the RUF. We took this step with the knowledge that the only way of bringing the war to an end was by negotiated settlement. We were aware of the problem relating to the questionable loyalty of the military to my civilian government that had just succeeded a military regime. I was elected President against the background of the heightened expectation of the RUF of actually taking over the entire country because of the successes they had already achieved in battle. Their manifest hostility to my Government which by insisting on "elections before peace" had caused them a sense of frustration was therefore explicable even though not justifiable. All these weakened the bargaining position of my Government when it entered the Abidjan Peace Talks with the RUF rebels in 1996. However, a Peace Agreement was concluded in spite

of the acrimony engendered by the rebels during the negotiations. The key elements in that Agreement worth mentioning here were -

1. The total and immediate cessation of hostilities
2. The disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of all combatants
3. The disbandment and withdrawal from the country of all mercenaries
4. The provision of an amnesty for the rebels
5. The establishment of a Truth and Reconciliation Commission
6. The establishment of a Commission for the Consolidation of the Peace with far reaching responsibilities for ensuring that the peace agreed in that Accord was sustained

18. The people of Sierra Leone wholeheartedly welcomed the signing of this Agreement and there was nationwide jubilation as they regarded it as the end of their woes and suffering and that it would restore lasting peace to the country. It soon turned out that the people and the Government had in fact been deceived by the RUF. A message from Foday Sankoh to Sam Bockarie alias Maskita which was intercepted by the Government only days after the signing of the Agreement, clearly showed that the RUF did not enter the peace negotiations in good faith and had no desire to abide by the terms of the resulting Peace Agreement. In that message, Foday Sankoh had communicated with his Field Commander, Sam Bockarie, alias Maskita, that he had agreed to participate in the negotiations and to sign the Peace Agreement only as a pretext to relieve himself of the pressure of the international community; that he never intended to abide by its terms. In the same message he ordered his commanders to resume hostilities even with greater force. Indeed the ceasefire which then prevailed was unilaterally broken by the RUF immediately after the signing of the Agreement, a clear indication that the Abidjan Agreement was doomed to fail.

19. Another matter by which Foday Sankoh demonstrated his insincerity in relation to the Abidjan Agreement was his refusal on the very day of the signing of the Agreement to append his signature to a document prepared and signed by me which needed to be mutually signed personally by him and by me to authorize the deployment of 90 UN Peace Keepers in Sierra Leone to monitor the observance of the ceasefire. The signing of that document by both of us was a precondition for such deployment. Sankoh had never agreed to sign that document. Thus, no peacekeepers came to Sierra Leone to observe the maintenance or otherwise of the ceasefire under that Agreement which was violated at will and in every respect by the RUF.

20. My Government however took measures immediately after the signing of the Abidjan Accord to implement all the obligations which on its part it had to implement under that Agreement, in particular those it could implement without needing the cooperation of the RUF to do so. Thus, I proclaimed and caused the granting of an amnesty to all the rebels to be gazetted; my Government terminated the contract entered into by the previous military regime with a mercenary South African security outfit, Executive Outcomes. I myself in principle detest the idea of mercenaries. But in the circumstances which then prevailed and to which I succeeded, the Executive Outcomes was the only credible and dependable military outfit opposing the rebels. It had held them at bay or at least successfully delayed their overrunning the entire country up to the date of the signing of the Abidjan Accord. There was therefore popular outcry that that outfit was to remain in Sierra Leone at least for a while. But because of the persistent demand of the RUF that they would sign the Abidjan Accord only if it contained a provision for the termination of the contract of the Executive Outcomes, I yielded to their demand in spite of the popular opposition and the heavy financial consequences that followed from the wrongful and premature termination of that contract. My Government is still paying the damages which followed from such

termination. But my yielding to the demand of the RUF in this respect was dictated by my eagerness to produce an early negotiated settlement of the war and a speedy restoration of peace to enable my new Government to embark on the rehabilitation of the people and the economy, and the reconstruction of the extensively damaged infrastructure of the country and on meaningful development. But alas! The real motive of the RUF for their demand for the exit of the Executive Outcomes as it turned out was to facilitate their taking over of the whole country, as with this outfit gone, there remained no credible and dependable military force to oppose and resist their advance.

21. My Government was also able to persuade the international community to prevail on the RUF to nominate its representatives to the Commission for the Consolidation of the Peace. This Commission, which was to sit in Freetown, was to be made up of an equal number of representatives from the RUF and the Government with a rotating Chairman. As Foday Sankoh was still resident in Abidjan and had no intention to return to Freetown until the RUF had secured victory, the Commission was charged with the responsibility of reporting to him in Abidjan progress of their deliberations. For this reason, the entire Commission went to Abidjan early in 1997 to meet him. Foday Sankoh refused to see the members of the Commission who waited to see him for a long time. While the members of the Commission were still in Abidjan hoping to see him, Foday Sankoh left for Nigeria in March 1997 where he was arrested for trafficking in arms. After his arrest, Sam Bockari, alias Maskita lured three of the RUF members of the Commission into a trap where they were arrested incarcerated and tortured. They were released only in 1999 after the Lome Peace Agreement was concluded. By Foday Sankoh's refusal to see the members of the Commission in Abidjan and the subsequent arrest of its members, he had brought an end to the implementation of a very significant provision in the Abidjan Accord and thus jeopardized the success of that Accord. Again, Foday Sankoh's conduct in relation to the Commission for the Consolidation of Peace is an indication and affirmation of his initial intention as manifested in other respects, namely that he did not enter the negotiations of the Abidjan Agreement in good faith and he never wished that Agreement to succeed.

22. There were other inherent weaknesses in the Abidjan Accord itself which, on hindsight, I considered as contributing to its failure. These were in addition to the factors external to the Accord and to the real hope of the RUF of taking the entire country because of the military situation which then prevailed. In the first place, there was little or no political incentive in the Accord for the RUF to abide by the Abidjan Peace Accord. This contrasts that Accord sharply with the Lome Peace Agreement. Of course, the absence of any power sharing provisions in the Accord was of no great inducement, which to them would have been merely half of the loaf. They already had firmly within their grip, or at least they thought, more than half of the loaf. The remainder of the loaf was attainable with ease. Thus they did not seriously demand or make power sharing or political incentives a pre-condition for signing the Accord. To the credit of the RUF however, some attempts were made at making some social demands, for example, free education for all, of course, without consideration to the devastated state of the country's economy at the time, all due to them. Secondly, there was also a minimal provision for disarmament, demobilization and reintegration without any specific source of funding referred to, which meant that the average fighter within the RUF's movement was unlikely to receive any form of monetary payment and would hardly be able to show anything for the years of fighting he had been engaged in. Thirdly, unlike the Lome Peace Agreement, the Abidjan Accord did not provide for a definite time scale for the implementation of its provisions except in the case of the Government which had to do certain things within a rigid time period, for example, to abrogate the agreement with the Executive Outcomes within a month of the signing of the Accord. Fourthly, most of the obligations under the Abidjan Accord were imposed on the Government. Besides

the obligation to cease hostilities and a few others, the RUF was not required to do anything or anything within a specific time frame.

23. Thus, as a result of the provisions in the Abidjan Accord, while the Government was dismantling its meager remaining security and defence outfit and structures, the RUF was consolidating its own, making further penetration into the country and further strengthening its alliance with the disloyal members of the Sierra Leone Military Forces. Existence of this alliance became apparent when the coup d'etat of the 25th May 1997 occurred. The rapidity with which the makers of that coup invited the RUF to participate with them in the coup and the equal rapidity of the positive response of the RUF to that invitation and their presence in Freetown and other towns which they had not been able to penetrate earlier are all clear manifestations of the existence of such alliance long before the date of the coup.

#### **THE INITIAL INDIFFERENCE OF THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY TO THE PLIGHT OF SIERRA LEONE**

24. For some years the war in Sierra Leone was treated as a localized conflict which did not deserve international attention or even indirect intervention. This was the position up to the time I assumed power in 1996. I made several requests for international assistance to strengthen the capacity of the security forces especially in the areas of intelligence gathering and training but to these requests I either received a flat refusal or where there was some positive response, the assistance given was too paltry to make any significant impact. I give here some instances of the way in which the international community initially reacted to my requests for assistance and the dire need we then had to build up a dependable intelligence network.

1. a) After the signing of the Abidjan Accord in 1996 and when it became apparent to me that the RUF was not going to comply with the terms of that Accord, I started thinking of other ideas of beefing up the security of the country. My initial approach was to the Americans to assist us with weapons, as our armoury was empty. The rebuff I had from my request was that the United States Government would not as a matter of policy provide to a third world country aid which might turnout to be lethal.
2. b) I then requested the Americans and the British to assist us with the training of our soldiers at the Benguema Training Centre. Their response was to send five soldiers, two Americans and three British. The highest rank of them was that of a Sergeant. In the course of the training at Benguema there was a report of a rebel attack at Kabala. I ordered the deployment of some soldiers who were then being trained by the British and Americans to Kabala to deal with that attack. These soldiers mutinied instead of complying with my orders as their Commander-in-Chief. The reaction of the American and British training team to this situation was to leave the country without even saying goodbye.
3. c) A real handicap which my Government faced after the Abidjan Accord which again had adverse effect on the security situation in the country, was not only the absence of a dependable system of gathering intelligence, but the failure by the security forces to provide my Government with reliable and credible intelligence which would form a proper basis for the Government to make policies or take actions relating to the security of the country. When they gave intelligence reports such reports were full of contradictions, deliberate falsehoods and deceptions, all aimed at misleading my Government into believing that the army, in relation to the conduct of the war, was on top of the situation. Sometimes, I would receive at the same time two intelligence reports about the same situation or incident which were so diametrically opposed to each other that I was unable to act on either of them. I give here some examples of

such contradictory, misleading and false intelligence reports that were furnished to me at the time. I give below some examples:-

- ? At one time I received an intelligence report that the rebels were preparing an attack on Pujehun and within moments I received another report that the rebels were leaving Pujehun to attack Kailahun. In that situation I would not decide whether I was to order the defence of Pujehun or of Kailahun.
- ? On a number of occasions the army Chief and his men brought to me information about a successful military campaign by them which resulted in the routing or dislocation of the enemy and seizure or destruction of its logistics including even the killing of known rebel commanders. Such a false account was given to me in relation to a purported attack of government troops on a rebel camp in the provinces. In the report it was alleged that that camp was wholly destroyed, a large number of rebels including their commander, Superman, was killed. A photograph of a charred bed alleged to have been that of Superman was produced to me as proof of the truth of the contents of that report. Superman was one of the most hated of the rebel commanders as he was notorious for his unrelenting propensity to cause mayhem and carnage on the civilian population. As it turned out, the report was wholly untrue. The particular camp was never attacked by Government troops and it remained intact long after the Lome Peace Agreement in 1999. Superman himself remained alive for a long time after that report and he perished only in a brawl that ensued later within the ranks of the rebels themselves.
- ? In the attempt of the security forces to furnish me with false intelligence reports, I had the experience of listening in the military network to a conversation between two military officers one giving a glowing account of a very successful exploit by the Government troops against the rebels. This conversation became the subject of a Situation Report (Sitrep), which was presented to me in order to give the impression that the military's conduct of the war against the rebels deserved to be commended. It turned out that the contents of that Sitrep did not bear any reality to any event at all, but that the two officers who were in conversation were each in different rooms of State House.
- ? When I received from members of the public information relating to security matters, the only means I had for checking on the status of such information was to refer it to the existing security outfit for investigation. I had no means of verifying the accuracy of whatever findings on that information that was reported to me.

As a result of this appalling lack of dependable means for me to be furnished with credible and truthful intelligence, I sought from the United Kingdom Government, assistance in this area. My request was turned down on the grounds that to assist an African Government in the area of intelligence would amount to assisting that Government to entrench itself and to resist any regime change. Because of this latter rebuff, my Government increasingly turned for assistance in this area and other areas to our ECOWAS neighbours, principally Nigeria, and then Guinea and others.

#### **The military coup of May, 1997**

25. On my taking up office as President in 1996 thereby succeeding a military junta, the National Provisional Ruling Council (NPRC) I was bequeathed with a security outfit which had been politicized for years as I have already mentioned and which regarded itself as having loyalty not to the Government of the day but to the only political class which they had known over the years and to which they had related. The one thing the NPRC coup of 1992 did was to bring an end to that political hegemony and to prevent it from perpetuating itself further. But the ill

effect of that coup, like all others, was to entrench the military in government in this case for a period of four years. In this situation, even when the leadership of the NPRC appeared to have given up power on the assumption of office of my civilian Government in 1996 there still remained in the military in both senior and junior ranks, elements who had tasted power and what they considered as the perquisites of power. They were not prepared to give these up lightly and become loyal to my civilian Government. These were, for instance, personal bodyguards, drivers and batmen of the NPRC Secretaries of State. Such lackeys, because of the positions occupied by their patrons were able to amass a lot of ill-gotten wealth by their extortion and intimidation of the civilian population who held such soldiers in awe. The fear of their losing their undeserved privileges and of an end of the opportunities they had for amassing more wealth illegally was one main reason for their unwillingness to accept the changes from a military regime to civilian rule.

26. In addition to their continued active collaboration with the rebels, they attempted a number of coups d'etat, which were foiled. One such coup plot involving an acting Major Johnny Paul Koroma was unearthed early in 1997. In order to produce a thorough and objective investigation into the allegations relating to that plot I requested the Government of Nigeria to assist my Government by the provision of experienced Nigerian investigators. As a result of those investigations Major Johnny Paul Koroma and a number of junior military officers were charged with treason. In this case, even though all the accused persons were military men and therefore liable to be tried by court-martial, they were all indicted in a civilian court. The trial was in progress when the AFRC coup occurred in May, 1997. The prisons were broken into and the accused persons were released. Major Johnny Paul Koroma became the leader and Chairman of the junta. I and my Government then went into exile in Guinea from where we operated. The entire Sierra Leone populace and the international community totally rejected that coup, refused to cooperate with the junta, and demanded the immediate and unconditional restoration of my civilian government.

27. Because of the refusal of the AFRC (which was now in formal league with the RUF) to relinquish power and the uncompromising insistence of the people of the country and the international community on the restoration of my civilian government, it became necessary for ECOWAS to devise an exit strategy for the AFRC. This became the Conakry Peace Plan of November 1997. By this plan, the AFRC/RUF were to take measures one after another to dismantle their outfit with a view of restoring my Government back in Sierra Leone within six months of the conclusion of the Plan. Of course, the AFRC/RUF failed to comply and this resulted in the military intervention by ECOMOG in February, 1998, the ousting of that military junta and the eventual restoration of my Government in Freetown.

28. It needs to be stated that my Government was not a party to the Conakry Peace Plan of 1997. It only had an observer status at the talks that resulted in that Plan. My Government did not wish to compromise its constitutional credentials by entering into a dialogue with the AFRC/RUF on the status of that junta on which it did not at all wish to confer even de facto legality. Again, the issue of power sharing between my Government and the AFRC/RUF junta or for that matter any other entity appeared for the first time in the Conakry Peace Plan.

28a. Incidentally, before I leave the AFRC, I need to give a brief account of some of the reckless manner in which that regime dealt with the assets of this country. Some of the associates of the junta had no restraint in causing further havoc on the country.

At the request of Mr. Victor Foh, a gentleman, Mr. Michael Hart Jones, purporting to belong to a company named Africa Trade Link Ltd. entered into an arrangement with the AFRC junta whereby the unused mining and mineral reserves of this country were to be used as collateral for a loan that the junta was determined to obtain.

In this connection in a faxed message sent to Mr. Foh, dated 24th September 1997, Mr. Hart-Jones purported to have secured one billion dollars for the project. The project was to involve the Government giving four securities to the tune of \$200 million and the mining concessions were to be the collateral. The funds to be raised by this arrangement were alleged to be intended to be utilized partly on the services of the AFRC junta.

The scheme was to be effected as follows: -

A company named Commercial African Development Ltd. (CARD) was re-registered in Sierra Leone on the 19th day of December 1997. This Company was made to enter into a joint partnership with the junta and the mining concessions in respect of the richest mining areas in the country were given to the joint venture. Four Bank Guarantees of \$50 million each dated 12th November 1997, in favour of CARD for the \$200 million secured were then issued by the Governor of the Bank of Sierra Leone and the Minister of Finance, both appointees of the junta.

If the AFRC had not been ousted in February 1998, thereby aborting the scheme, the effect on Sierra Leone and its economy as a result of this arrangement would have been -

1. Laundered money would have been brought into this country undetected and this would have had serious adverse effect on the economy for a very long time. In the fax message in question, it was made clear that the one billion dollars which was said to have been earmarked to be brought to the country would have been brought stealthily and under cover.
2. The Bank of Sierra Leone and the Government would have been encumbered with an obligation to discharge the security of \$200 million as a result of a scheme that would not have benefited the people and Government of Sierra Leone, and in any case, only members of the junta and their associates like Victor Foh would have been the beneficiaries of that arrangement.
3. The worst aspect of that scheme was that the richest and most profitable mining areas in this country were given as collateral under that arrangement and those areas were available to be mined without restriction and the proceeds from them taken away without any account given. The areas to be affected were carefully identified and mapped out.

The documents involved in this transaction are available here for the Commission's perusal. ([Click here for documents](#))

The account of this transaction needs to be brought to the notice of the Commission merely for the purpose of further illustrating the reckless manner in which regimes, which were unaccountable, schemed to wreck the economy and destroy the mineral assets of this country.

#### **The Lome Peace Agreement 1999**

29. During the intervention by ECOMOG in February 1998, a number of the senior cadre of the AFRC/RUF junta and their men escaped arrest and sought refuge in the jungle. There they regrouped in readiness to make a comeback. They intensified their activities predominantly in the diamond mining areas. Thus, they were able to mine diamonds which they exchanged cheaply for weapons with which they armed themselves to the teeth. The concentration of ECOMOG was mainly in the large towns. The AFRC/RUF were able to move through the jungle into Freetown. It was the invasion of the Capital City of Freetown and the slaughtering of thousands of civilians which, for the first time, awakened genuine international awareness to the plight of the civilian population. That incursion was remarkable because of the speed with which it almost engulfed the city and by the level of the mayhem and destruction which resulted from it.

30. The outcome of that incursion was the dire need for the acceleration of the peace process. In collaboration with ECOWAS, the international community was now willing to intervene, at least diplomatically, and they together with the Government were now determined to find a workable and lasting solution to the rebel menace in this country. This led to the commencement of the dialogue which resulted in the Lome Peace Agreement of 1999. The initial stage for the dialogue was set when I was invited to Lome to sign a Ceasefire Agreement with the RUF Leader, Foday Sankoh in March 1999. I did this amidst a lot of misgivings from the people of Sierra Leone. From the bitter experience they had had regarding Foday Sankoh's attitude to the Abidjan Peace Accord they on the one hand, preferred an all out war against the rebels and an attainment of peace by their defeat in battle. I on the other, was aware of the handicaps and limitations of the Government to proceed that way. I was also aware of the pending restoration of a democratically elected Government in Nigeria as a result of which the continued stay of the Nigerian contingent in ECOMOG in Sierra Leone, which was by far the largest, could not be guaranteed. Thus I chose the path of dialogue, but this time, careful to avoid the pitfalls and weaknesses in the Abidjan Peace Accord.

31. In my opinion, there is the need to state here why a new Peace Agreement was necessary in order to reactivate the Peace Process; why we did not just resurrect the Abidjan Peace Accord, which after all had never been abrogated. It was even reaffirmed in the Lome Agreement itself. The most important element now was the AFRC factor, which was not present in the Abidjan Peace Accord. There was also the emergence of a new portent force, the Civil Defence Forces to which too recognition had to be given in any new arrangement. Thus, the objective aimed to be achieved by a new peace agreement could not be achieved by merely effecting a patchwork to the Abidjan Peace Accord.

#### **Reasons for the Relative Success of the Lome Peace Agreement 1999**

32. Although a number of terms in the Abidjan Peace Accord were imported into the Lome Peace Agreement, there were additional key factors on the ground and in the latter Agreement itself that led to its success.

1. (a) There was then a robust presence of ECOMOG on the ground which was given a role in the monitoring of the implementation and observance of the terms of the Agreement. ECOMOG, unlike the Sierra Leone army had already demonstrated their ability and willingness to successfully confront the AFRC/RUF.
2. (b) There were above all else the power sharing provisions in the Lome Agreement. These included Cabinet, Deputy Ministerial, Ambassadorial positions and Directorships in Parastatals
3. (c) There was the appointment of the RUF Leader as Chairman of the newly provided-for Commission for the Management of Strategic Mineral Resources plus status equivalent to Vice President.
4. (d) Extensive provisions were made for the payment of all sorts of fees and allowances to the rank and file of the RUF in exchange for their participation in the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration process.
- 5.
6. (e) There were numerous provisions in the Agreement itself committing the international community to the funding or assisting in the funding of a number of the activities or institutions established by the Agreement.

33. All these offers and provisions in that Agreement proved too tantalizing for the AFRC/RUF to refuse. It was these new provisions which finally tilted the balance in favour of the peace process. The benefits of all those offers had to be

enjoyed in Sierra Leone and they could not be enjoyed by a person still engaged in war against the Government. Thus the disarmament proceeded steadily.

34. Another matter which assisted the implementation of the Lome Peace Agreement was the fact that activities that were provided for in the Agreement had to be performed within stated time periods. Further, that Agreement like the Abidjan Accord, also conferred on the members of the AFRC/RUF a blanket amnesty for all their wrong doings up to the date of the Agreement.

35. To the average Sierra Leonean, the terms of the Lome Agreement were like a bitter pill they were asked to swallow. It was like the case of the perpetrators being richly rewarded whilst the poor victims received nothing at all and were further required in the name of reconciliation to forgive and forget. Had it not been for the events of May 8, 2000 the members of the AFRC/RUF would most likely still be enjoying the benefits of the provisions of the Lome Peace Agreement. But unfortunately, the temptation arose within the ranks of the AFRC/RUF to continuously breach the terms of the Agreement. In the process, they articulated one of the weaknesses inherent in the Agreement which was that in the absence of any provision vis-à-vis accountability and particularly because of the blanket amnesty the attitude of the rank and file of the members of the AFRC/RUF was that they could continue to commit further atrocities without being held to account. We had resisted the persuasion of the international community for the exclusion of war crimes, crimes against humanity and against international humanitarian law from the applicability of the amnesty provision in the Lome Agreement. We did this deliberately. We realized that limiting the operation of the amnesty provisions would give a justification to the AFRC/RUF for refusing to sign that Agreement and for the resumption of hostilities in the country. Thus, we put beyond the ability and outside the jurisdiction of our domestic courts power over the prosecution of crimes committed before the signing of the Lome Agreement since the amnesty granted amount to a constitutional bar to any form of prosecution in our domestic courts in respect of the offences amnestied. Further, there was no provision in the Agreement that was to act as a deterrent against the resumption of hostilities on the part of the AFRC/RUF. This led to numerous occasions of violent acts by individual members of AFRC/RUF particularly in the provinces - all in the belief that those acts would go unpunished. Thus, the threat of the AFRC/RUF resuming hostilities was always hanging like the sword of Damocles over the heads of Sierra Leoneans.

36. Indeed, both the Abidjan Peace Accord and the Lome Peace Agreement provided for a Truth and Reconciliation Commission, and obviously since the Commission would not have powers to punish, the AFRC/RUF willingly agreed to its inclusion in the Agreement. Again even long before the enactment of the legislation for the establishment of the TRC, I had myself embarked upon a nationwide campaign to urge reconciliation and forgiveness as I regarded this as a most important element for the sustenance of the peace. I had also urged my Ministers and other Government officials and functionaries to take advantage of their private or public discussions with members of the public to do the same. When the Truth and Reconciliation Commission Act 2000 was promulgated, I established a committee comprising some key Ministers and RUF members to tour the provinces together to urge reconciliation and reintegration of ex-combatants in their communities of origin.

37. But alas! The insincerity of the AFRC/RUF both in negotiating and adhering to the Peace Agreements had been abundantly manifested by the 8th of May, 2000. Although they were anxious to receive and utilize all the benefits and privileges accorded them under the Lome Peace Agreement, they certainly were not interested in the burdens thereunder, nor did they consider themselves bound by that Agreement in so far as it imposed any obligations on them. Unfortunately, they could not and did not avail themselves of the benefits without fulfilling their own obligations since there were no conditions precedent to be fulfilled by them, nor were these benefits tied up reciprocally to any obligations on their part.

Rather, most of the Government's obligations were to be performed within the context of a strict time frame regardless of non-performance on the part of the AFRC/RUF. It was therefore inevitable that the harassed, brutalized and dehumanized citizens of Sierra Leone would finally rise against the excesses of the AFRC/RUF which were in flagrant violation to what the people considered as the final peace settlement in the form of the Lome Peace Agreement. The people organized a peaceful demonstration and marched on the residence of Foday Sankoh, the rebel leader, to insist on his observing the terms of the Agreement and to refrain from continuing with activities which obviously threatened the peace, activities such as the continued taking as hostages of UN Peace Keepers and the persistent laying of ambushes on the highways for unsuspecting civilian travellers. His response to this peaceful demonstration was the cold-blooded murder of 21 of the demonstrators.

38. It was as a direct result of the events that led up to and inclusive of the incidence of the 8th May 2000 that my Government realised the insistence of the international community that there was a need to introduce some form of accountability mechanism and an avenue for the punishment of the perpetrators of the war crimes and other crimes. The Representative of the U.N. Secretary-General had, during the signing of the Lome Peace Agreement, expressly reserved the right of the international community not to be bound by the amnesty provision in respect of flagrant violations of international humanitarian law and war crimes. This belated realization of my Government resulted in an agreement with the United Nations in January 2001 for the setting up of the Special Court for Sierra Leone.

#### **The Civil Defence Force**

39. At this point I consider it necessary to give a brief account of the Civil Defence Force as this outfit played a very significant role in the peace process. The promotion of reconciliation and national reintegration will be incomplete without their participation and cooperation in the process. At a particular point they were perceived as and became the embodiment of the collective will and determination of the population to resist the combined forces of the RUF rebels, AFRC and all other forces opposed to the legitimate regime of this country. For this reason it is important to include in this presentation a historical account of the CDF, how this institution evolved, the role it played and its relationship with the military forces.

40. Quite early after the RUF incursion into Sierra Leone in 1991 many able-bodied men volunteered to assist the Sierra Leone army in diverse ways in the prosecution of the war within their localities. Some of this assistance included providing information, guides and porter services in terrains in which they were obviously more familiar with. Some of the much younger volunteers had even become adopted members (so to speak) of some military units as they provided food, shelter and clothing and traveled with them virtually everywhere they went. The more adventurous of the volunteers were even encouraged to carry out more challenging tasks including penetrating behind rebel lines. Sometimes they were given weapons for such missions.

41. Before long, these volunteers, now named vigilantes, increasingly became casualties. Their numbers had increased many times and in most units they almost outnumbered the military personnel. This situation on many occasions interfered or impacted negatively on the performance of the forces as situations later proved. The Vigilantes at a later stage as they became more adventurous and became casualties made a collective request for their lot to be issued with weapons. In response to this request they were issued with MK 4 rifles and a substantial amount of ammunition. This practice heralded the proliferation of arms in the Eastern and Southern Sierra Leone for the most part of 1991 and 1992. Gradually the demands of the Vigilantes increased in types, quantities and quality of the equipment they asked for. In addition to the stores supplied, the Military was to start receiving subsidies to formally provide rations for the

Vigilantes. The level of such provisions and rations will be given below. Control of many of the Vigilante groups became very difficult for most units. It was reported then that many of the Vigilantes had been engaged in reprisal killings of their people as they avenged the brutal killings and burning of their family houses by rebels believed to have been aided by rival townsmates. Also reported was collusion between the rebels and some units of the military. This explains the lack of trust by the CDF of the military much later in the conflict.

43. By 1992 when the NPRC overthrew the APC government, perhaps the most organized of the Vigilante groups was the TAMABORO group from Koinadugu District. They were drawn from local hunters in the district and were believed to have supernatural powers, like many other groups that were formed long after. Some of these powers were widely accepted to have been demonstrated in many attacks the Tamaboro group led. Before long, however, the Tamaboro group became disillusioned as they complained they were unfavourably treated as compared to the Vigilantes located with the military forces deployed in the Eastern and Southern Provinces. Twice between 1992 and 1994 the Tamaboros were asked to return their weapons and return home.

44. With the increased demands of the Vigilantes and the need for them to have some formal military training, a few hundreds of them in the Eastern and Southern Provinces were selected and absorbed as Border Guards (BGs) and allocated military-style identification numbers. These Border Guards received their initial training within the units around which they were recruited. At the completion of their training, they were paid monthly allowances. By this time, the Border Guards could use about every type of weapon the soldiers were using.

45. Additional intakes or absorption of the Vigilantes or Border Guards were made and within the first three years of the war their numerical strength had almost equaled that of the regular soldiers. At this point the distrust between the military and the Vigilantes/Border Guards was mounting. The Vigilantes perceived some of the regular forces as colluding with the RUF rebels to attack their villages, kill their relations and destroy their properties.

46. By 1992 when the NPRC announced formally that Vigilante groups were to be formed in every locality, there were already many such groupings in many parts in the South and East working closely with the military. As the conflict moved to the North more Vigilante groups were formed in Port Loko, Bombali and Tonkolili Districts. These regional groupings developed later in the **GBETHIS** and **KAPRAS** in Temne areas in the North, and Tamaboro (reactivated) in Koinadugu and **DONSOS** in the Kono District. By far the largest grouping was the **KAMAJORS**, which drew its membership from the large Vigilante groups already existing in most of the Eastern and Southern Provinces. The Vigilante groups came to be referred to collectively as the Civil Defence Force (CDF).

47. The Kamajors were more cohesive and enjoyed the support of large numbers of sons and daughters both locally and in the Diaspora. Many had rightly assessed and experienced that the greatest destruction of human and material resources had taken place in their own homelands by that time. Other motivating factors included the frustration over the less-than desired efforts demonstrated by the military already perceived to be an extension of the already overthrown APC - hence their invigorating determination to provide their own defence. So, by the time the 1996 elections drew nearer and the established support demonstrated by the potential winning SLPP, the Kamajors and by extension the other CDF elements enjoyed considerable support not limited to their individual base areas. The people had then developed a collective and nationalistic faith in their resolve to take the defence of their country and their livelihood with or without their armed forces. The CDF symbolised that determination.

48. The CDF continued to play significant roles in providing the necessary leverage at critical stages for Government to tilt the scale to its favour - first against the RUF and on many occasions against the combined forces of the RUF and AFRC. For this reason, the CDF became a household name as the people

embraced it as the viable option. They provided the leverage at the 1996 elections; they were the vanguard of the ECOMOG-led force that countered the AFRC/RUF junta; they provided the leverage when the RUF misbehaved again and again - notably during the May 8, 2000 problem; they helped to send a clear message to all renegades that the people meant to realize the peace promised by my Presidency sooner rather than later, by the end of 2000. At the end of their voluntary service they gracefully disarmed, demobilized and most have since returned to their respective homes. Those who opted to go through the Military Reintegration Programme and were successful are now proud members of the Republic of Sierra Leone Armed Forces (RSLAF). Others still have been trained or are being trained in preparation for their reintegration into profitable civilian life.

49. It needs to be stated here that the role played by the CDF was at considerable cost to the Government. The numerical strength of the CDF nationwide was, towards the end of the war, given as 86,000 men.

The following expenditure on the CDF excluding cost of arms and ammunition for the Financial Year 2002 gives an idea of the financial burden the Government necessarily carried:

**Ration (Rice):**

(rice): 5,160 bags @ Le28,00 per bag  
 That is, Le144,480,000.00 per month  
 or - Le1,733,760,000.00 per annum

**Condiments:**

Le400 per person for 30 days -  
 That is, Le103,200,000.00 per month  
 or - Le1,238,400.00 per annum

Other Expenditures (transportation, fuel etc.)  
 Le753,418,491.36 per annum.

These figures show that the Government's total expenditure on the CDF for the Financial Year 2001 was Le3,725,578,491.36 (Three billion, seven hundred and twenty-five million, five hundred and seventy-eight thousand, four hundred and ninety-one Leones and thirty-six cents).

**Expenditure on the RSLAF for the Financial Year 2001:**

The expenditure on an estimated 15,000 men in the RSLAF in the Financial Year 2001 is given below. Again, these figures exclude salaries and allowances and the cost of arms and ammunition. The expenditure on the RSLAF for the same period was:-

1. Diets-Rice: 7,000 bags @ Le 29,000.00 per bag Le2,436,000,000.00.
2. Cash Ration Condiments: Le600.00 per soldier per day for 30 days - Le279,000,000.00 but government approved only Le270,000,000.00 per month.
3. Standing Monthly Imprest to Joint Support Command for Unclassified expenditure-Le100,000,000.00.
4. Medical Imprest-Le50,000,000.00 monthly to Director, forces medical services for the procurement of medical items for the Military not provided in the drugs contract.
5. Imprest for CDS-Le5,000,000.00 monthly.
6. Drugs-Le100,000,000.00 monthly.
7. Other Hospital equipment-Le2,914,387,692.00 monthly.
8. Fuel and Lubricants-Le2,782,978,767.00 monthly.
9. Support and Attack Helicopter Contract-Le5,475,387,692.00 per annum.
10. Spares for vehicles etc.-Le1,039,357,950.00.
11. Building Materials and related expenses for maintenance of military properties and buildings-Le1,177,825,978.00.
12. Stationery, Office equipment and furniture-Le1,015,476,427.00.

13. Utility Bills-700,880,127.00.
14. Travelling overseas and Intelligence gathering-Le1,552,352,667.00.
15. G1098 Stores-Le119,820,550.00.
16. Payment to Freetown Funeral Services Le17,585,00.00.
17. Rents and Compensations-Le302,669,540.00
18. Refund to Social Security fund for Rice-Le922,040,000.00.
19. Ferry Crossing-Le68,799,300.00.

Total expenditure on the RSLAF for the year 2001 was le25,625,561,690 (twenty-five billion, six hundred and twenty-five million five hundred and sixty-one thousand six hundred and ninety Leones).

50. The logistics support and the disbursement of the funds to the CDF was through their National Civil Coordinator, with whom their administration and supervision lay. The funds were provided direct from the Ministry of Finance through the Ministry of Defence.

51. As President, I did not and could not have interfered in the operations or the internal organization as I was not a member of the Society to which all the members of the CDF had to belong and which created a bond among them. My role was confined to ensuring that Government provided the required funds and logistics and to insisting that the membership of the CDF was contented, motivated enough to perform their security roles.

#### **The Special Task Force**

52. Another group which I came to know about much later as part of the security units utilized by the military, was the "Special Task Force". I was never briefed about this when I assumed office as President in 1996. I knew about the existence of this unit only on the day of the AFRC coup d'etat. Yet the army without regard for the origin and true motive of the members of this group had used them regularly and depended on them considerably.

53. It is important for this Commission to be told of the role played by this unit in thwarting our peace efforts. It is an instance of the reckless regard with which our national army treated the security of the country.

54. The **SPECIAL TASK FORCE** was a grouping of mainly Liberian militia personnel who survived the several internal power struggles that characterized the initial coalition force put together to counter Charles Taylor's NPFL forces in Liberia.

55. By late 1990 when the Liberian war had reached the outskirts of Monrovia, the refugee flow into Sierra Leone had reached its highest peak. Among these refugees were a substantial number of remnants of the late President Samuel Doe's Armed Forces of Liberia (AFL) and Liberia Police Force personnel who had fled the fighting. Their common objective was to regroup and return to Liberia to continue their resistance against Charles Taylor's NPFL. This group included a number of influential Liberians who were supporters of the late Samuel Doe's regime. This new alliance was received by the APC Government and allowed to remain in the country, and a special relationship developed between them and the Government. Gradually and predictably the Liberians requested for support from the Government, initially by way of better accommodation facilities for their leaders and then financial support. When the RUF incursion occurred in Sierra Leone in March 1991 the Government yielded to their demand to be supplied with weapons which they could use to stave off the Charles Taylor inspired incursion. By this time, they had developed independent ambitions of their own, namely to use the weapons supplied them by the Government to invade Liberia and halt the rapid advances of Charles Taylor. Thus instead of utilizing the weapons supplied them in the defence of this country they hid them and always came back demanding more weapons for more military operations, many of which were only stage-managed.

56. Eventually, the unit of Liberian dissidents and refugees in Sierra Leone was named **ULIMO** with Roosevelt Johnson as their field commander. Again the new structure was fraught with intrigues amongst the various tribal groups notably **KHRANS** and **MADINGOS**. A **split** occurred, Alhaji Koroma spearheaded a splinter group - **ULIMO K** backed by Madingo financiers based in Kenema (and some key Guinean top officials). The other group holding allegiance to Roosevelt Johnson became the **ULIMO J** faction.

57. When the NPRC Government took over in 1992 ULIMO did not take long to support the overthrow. Efforts by the ousted APC regime to get them to mobilise against the NPRC did not yield much. Again, at that stage ULIMO used the opportunity to acquire more weapons and

other logistical support. They joined the new regime as they now saw a better future in the perceived-to-be more youthful NPRC.

58. The NPRC inherited from the APC regime the problem of ULIMO, but it too never settled it or attempted to settle it. All it did was to insist on the dropping of the "J" and "K" from the names of the two factions and to collectively rename them **SPECIAL TASK FORCE (STF)**. The Special Task Force was then almost incorporated in to the Sierra Leone Army and they received salaries, allowances and their supplies were regularly replenished. The two leaders of the ULIMO K and ULIMO J factions, Alhaji Koroma and General Johnson respectively later became members of the interim Government of Liberia headed by Charles Taylor. Brigadier David Livingston Bropleh eventually became the new head of the Special Task Force.

59. The Special Task Force had its own command line separate from that of the Sierra Leone Army. Their personnel were attached to the army units throughout the country. For many operations, however, the Special Task Force elements in the units were regrouped into one large unit. There was a general understanding that the Special Task Force were experienced in jungle warfare and could match the RUF in the brutal manner in which they handled their troops - and hence their perceived effectiveness in jungle fighting compared to the troops of the Sierra Leone army.

60. My Government inherited the STF, but I never knew of the existence of this outfit within the security apparatus as no one briefed me about its existence. Incidentally this situation was no different from the military's about my persistent requests to know more about the military itself especially in such crucial matters as the strength of the military. There was no other means which I could source such information. But as the war was still waging I allowed the status quo to continue while my Government continued to provide funds, rations and other logistics as demanded by the military.

61. I first knew of the existence of the Special Task Force as part of our security apparatus on the 25th May, 1997, the day of the AFRC coup. While I was listening to the military network, I heard the Chief of Defence Staff then of the Sierra Leone military, ordering the Special Task Force to move and engage the disloyal troops so as to foil the incipient coup. Instead of doing this, the Special Task Force moved and joined forces with the AFRC junta and together they overpowered the few remaining loyal troops. Their leader, General Bropleh was compensated by the AFRC junta when he was made adviser to Johnny Paul Koroma and given special privileges.

General Bropleh and his STF followers fled together with other AFRC Junta personnel when the ECOMOG-led force removed the junta from Freetown in February 1998. Together they played an active role in all the attacks that displaced ECOMOG and Government troops in such places as Koidu, Makeni, Kamakwie and Lunsar. They supported the January 6th 1999 attack of Freetown. On the recall of all military personnel in 2000 after the granting of the amnesty in the Lome Peace Agreement 1999, the STF resurfaced with General Bropleh still at the helm of the Force. When this fact came to my knowledge I ordered the

expulsion of General Bropleh and his men from Sierra Leone. He made a U-turn and was back in the country. I finally succeeded in getting him out of the country when I insisted with UNHCR that it was their responsibility to secure a safe haven for this man and that his continued stay in Sierra Leone was no longer desirable.

63. This account, I hope, gives the Commission an idea of the precarious security situation which prevailed in the country before and after my assumption of office. That situation did not arise accidentally. It was contrived without due regard for the true security of the people of this country and it was the people who became victims of the reckless conduct of their Government.

#### **CONCLUSION**

64. In this Statement I have endeavoured to furnish the Commission with an account of the political experience the people of Sierra Leone went through for nearly three decades and how this adversely impacted on the security of this country. I have illustrated the consequences which flowed from the conduct of previous Governments when such conduct was not focused on or did not take into account the interest of the people and the nation which those governments purported to serve. I have shown how a Government which is more preoccupied with its own survival is bound to embark on measures which will alienate from it the citizens who do not necessarily subscribe to its views on national issues and thereby exclude them from participation in the governance of the nation. I have further narrated the myriad of state actions which resulted in the destruction of national cohesion and in the alienation of the people whom it is now our duty to reconcile and reintegrate. Some of the matters I have narrated here are within my personal knowledge. Some have come to my knowledge from the materials I have come by, as a result of my own researches or from the accounts given to me by persons credible enough to be believed. I am aware that this Commission will be submitting its Report and Recommendations to me in due course for my consideration. Be that as it may, I now wish to bring to the attention of the Commission some of my own views and thoughts on how reconciliation can be promoted in this country and how national reintegration can better be achieved, and the steps and measures my Government has taken so far in this direction. I believe that these will not only prevent a recurrence of the horrible experiences the people of this country have gone through, but will also further promote national cohesion.

1. Sierra Leone Governments should always strive to maintain peaceful relations with other countries, especially neighbouring countries. Efforts should be made at giving this country a reputation of a haven of peace where both citizens and non-citizens can live in peace. Instead of embarking on a deliberate policy of fuming conflicts and discord in neighbouring countries, our Governments should strive to make Sierra Leone a Centre for peace talks and peace settlements and the resolution of conflicts between countries and within sister countries.
2. Government and all opinion formers should lead in the promotion of reconciliation and national reintegration. The effort in this regard should be real and practical. I have referred in this Statement to the practical steps my Government has taken and continues to take in this direction. I have since established the office of reconciliation and national reintegration with the former Vice President of Sierra Leone as head. His principal role is to visit areas in the country where there may be a concentration of persons who because of their activities during the war are now afraid or reluctant to return to their original localities. His business is to reconcile those persons to their communities and facilitate their reintegration.
3. Governments should maintain zero tolerance for corruption. Above all, Governments should avoid the use of public funds to promote political

causes and in order to ensure its stay in power. I have given in this Statement a glaring example of how the APC Party was intent on using public funds to prevent the holding of elections which it was sure to lose. This was an instance of blatant abuse of office and it was bound to provoke the resentment of the people.

4. Governments should espouse the observance of human rights by all State Organs. Every citizen should experience fairness and equality of treatment by the State. It is for this reason that my Government is contemplating the establishment of an effective human rights organization as a successor to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. It is hoped that when established that unit will ensure the protection of the rights of the citizens even against the Government. More importantly it would be structured in such a way and given enough capacity to educate the citizens adequately on their rights under the law and also their civic obligations. I hold the view that unless the people are aware of their rights and their civic duties, they cannot insist on the observance of those rights nor can the Government properly expect them to perform their own civic obligations to the State and their community.
5. Any effort whether made overtly or covertly or by any ruse by the government or President to extend its or his stay in office beyond the period provided for in the Constitution should be condemned and criminalized. We have seen in this country how Governments stage-managed demonstrations demanding the continued stay in office of a President irrespective of the Constitutional provision on the matter.
6. The use of hired thugs to advance any political objective should be proscribed as a threat to the security of the State.

All civil defence organizations shall only operate within the security system of the country. Where such organization

7. become necessary, they should be an integral part of the security apparatus of the country and subject to its formal command structure.
8. Governments should practise measures which will promote national cohesion. Thus appointments to public offices not made on merit but on the basis of regional, religious or personal affiliations can only militate against the promotion of national cohesion.
9. I am aware of the cynical attitude of the people generally against politicians. Because of the record of politicians in this country, the attitude of the people is, with some justification even more cynical. If there is no change in the behaviour of politicians, the people will lose confidence in them. The consequence of this happening will be awful to contemplate. One way to restore the trust and confidence of the people in all those holding political offices is to convince them that they hold such offices for the purpose of serving the population and not for personal enrichment or self aggrandizement. Our catch-word as politicians should be service. We need to demonstrate this in a practical way. It is for this reason that I have often described myself as the Chief Servant of the people and required all other public officers to regard themselves as servants of the people. A practical way of our illustration of the concept of service and not personal gain is by subjecting our own salaries to the determination by a Commission comprising Civil Society and other prominent citizens, particularly those who have demonstrated the highest level of integrity in private or public life. This of course will require an adjustment of the present Constitutional position. This is to reinforce the point I have made elsewhere, namely, that unless the wealth of the nation is seen as being

distributed equitably there is bound to grow jealousy and resentment by the governed against the governing class.

10. I would insist that political parties should seek the mandate of the electorate in the form of clear-cut programmes, issues or manifestos presented to them for their choice and not by way of invoking regional, tribal or religious affiliations. Elections won on the basis of such affiliations would be bound to produce a government that will practise nepotism with adverse consequences to the nation. Similarly, I would urge that a culture be inculcated in our politicians for the practice of cooperating on matters which are in the national interest. It is no business of the Opposition Parties to oppose government measures merely for the sake of making political points, and to do so even if in the process they mislead the public or incite them to disaffection against the Government. Both Government and Opposition have equal duty to refrain from conduct or public pronouncements which may tend to damage the image and reputation of the country; both have a duty to strive to achieve the best for the people and the country. It is for this reason that I often say that after elections, politics takes the back seat, and government, meaning the pursuing by the organs of the state of what is good for the people, takes the front seat.
11. Members of the public too have a duty to ensure that the Government and all organs of State work properly and in the public interest. It will be folly for any Government to pretend that it exclusively has the solution to all the problems facing the country. Members of the public who believe they have ideas or proposals which may influence the effective performance by Government of its functions should regard themselves as obliged to air out those ideas or proposals frankly and objectively, failing this, they stand the risk of forfeiting the right to criticize the Government's inaction in respect of those matters. The fanciful practice of condemning or blaming government for all ills in society which are within the power of the public to prevent or make good should be avoided.
12. In the case of the military, I have already demonstrated that what they lacked was proper motivation and direction, and that they were made to owe loyalty not to the State, but to a particular political party or particular politicians. The politicization of the security forces deprived them of their professionalism and the proper focus on their constitutional role, namely, to guard and secure the State, to participate in national development and to protect and secure the people's achievement. The emphasis of my Government has since been to reverse this situation and to ensure that the security forces are given the motivation and direction needed to enable them to perform their assigned roles effectively and efficiently solely in the national interest and in a manner befitting the present democratic setting. By providing them with proper training, logistics and orientation, their general performance is progressively becoming commendable. Government is determined to even improve upon this. Government also regards it as its duty to care for the welfare of the security forces. In return, they too are required to perform their assigned roles and exhibit professionalism and patriotism in doing so. With this, they will regain the respect of the entire citizenry. Favourable results are now emerging in this regard and there is marked cordial civilian/military relationship developing. It is necessary that the depoliticisation of the security forces, and their maintenance of professionalism at all times should be promoted by Government. There is also the emergence of the new esprit de corps among the ranks of the forces. This is a positive trend which should be maintained and encouraged.

With all these, we can sustain the peace.

13. The attitude of workers in the public service and public Enterprises deserves my comment here. It is common knowledge that the average Sierra Leonean worker in the public sector does not exhibit the correct attitude to his work. He generally does not show the desired commitment especially in situations where he realizes only his legitimate income or salary. He engenders interest only when he stands to gain personally over and above his legitimate income. It is for this reason that Sierra Leonean workers involve themselves in illegal and corrupt practices in their places of work even at the expense of the survival of the organizations for which they work. This attitude accounts for the prevalence of corruption in the public service. The effect of this is not only to demean the character of the worker but also to prevent the organization itself from fulfilling its objectives. In the end the public are not provided with the services which they are entitled to from that organization. Government is blamed for this and there again exists another potential cause for popular discontent. Again, because of the negative attitude of Sierra Leoneans to their work, the nation loses opportunities to build wealth. Without this, better services cannot be provided for the population and the Government would be unable to pay salaries attractive enough to retain competent public officers and engage new ones in the public service. They are lost to the private sector with the result that the nation continues to plod on with unproductive, inefficient and often corrupt officers.
14. Another matter which needs to be mentioned here is the attitude of the press in Sierra Leone. Indeed the Government fully subscribes to the freedom of the press. This is an important institution, which enhances the practice of democracy and helps in the promotion of good governance. The hallmark of a democratic society is the existence of a free press with the ability to expose the excesses of the government and of persons in authority. What is objectionable however, about the conduct of certain sections of the Sierra Leone Press is their unwarranted and unjustified attack on the personality and character of individuals. Some journalists do this without regard to the ethics that govern their profession and often for mean and malicious reasons. They write as facts what they know is untrue and without regard to the effect their publications would have on the reputation of those they write about. Such attitude does not promote reconciliation, especially in a country like ours just emerging from war. Another consequence of the practice of such unethical journalism is that it causes a number of persons of known impeccable character and reputation to shy away from public employment for fear that they would expose themselves unnecessarily and unjustifiably to the wrath of the press. A number of individuals of immense competence in particular areas of speciality have, for the same reason, turned down my offers of employment in public positions. In this way the nation has been deprived of the services of such persons. I am in no way against the press exposing for public knowledge, the improper conduct of public officers and the bad character or reputation of an individual proposed for appointment to a public position. This will be a valuable contribution by the press to the good governance of this country. All that is needed is that the publication must be factual, true and objective and devoid of malice or ill motive. Otherwise, the press instead of contributing to the enhancement of democracy would sow the seed of discord among the people.

I thank you for your attention.