

STATEMENT BY HIS EXCELLENCY
THE PRESIDENT
ON THE OCCASION OF THE INAUGURATION OF THE
SIERRA LEONE STOCK EXCHANGE
AT THE BANK OF SIERRA LEONE
MAIN BUILDING,
SIAKA STEVENS STREET, FREETOWN
FRIDAY 27TH JULY 2007

Mr Chairman
Honourable Vice President
Governor
Distinguished Private Sector Participants
Ladies and Gentlemen:

I need hardly remind you that today's ceremony is one of the last that I shall perform in my capacity as President of our dear country.

It gives me much satisfaction that the culmination of the efforts at establishing a stock exchange in Sierra Leone, as part of the wider programme of capital market development, should materialise during my administration.

Let me begin by extending my congratulations to the Governor and his team, especially the Deputy Governor who has served as Chairman of the Stock Exchange Technical Committee, and the group of private sector operators, who not only showed their appreciation of the dynamics of business finance by urging the speedy establishment of a stock exchange in Sierra Leone, but expended their time, and in some cases their money, in working with officials of the Bank of Sierra Leone and the Ministry of Finance, towards the realisation of this laudable objective. I am happy that your efforts have yielded positive results, and would wish to assure you that the financial history of this country would never be complete

without honourable mention of the role you have played in the development of this vital institution.

My delight in performing this ceremony arises from the fact that the establishment of a stock exchange accords with one of the central thrusts of my approach to public policy, which is to ensure that this country is endowed with relevant, well-based, robust and resilient institutions that would constitute the basis for its future growth and development.

During my tenure as President, I have sought to ensure that peace, security and stability obtain in this our beloved country, because without these fundamental development will permanently elude us. But next to these imperatives, I accorded top priority to the development of institutions conducive to healthy, social, political and economic development. This is for the basic reason that institutional development is the lynchpin on which national development depends. Without the right network of organisations, systems, laws and practices, the application of finance will fail to exert a positive impact on the growth of the economy and frustrate efforts at providing the required services to the populace, improve living standards and consolidate peace, harmony and security in a holistic development drive.

My efforts in this regard were more extensively catalogued in my last address to Parliament and I only wish to give a flavour in this statement. I have, during my presidency, spearheaded the creation of new institutions, as well as the reform of existing institutions as deemed appropriate. The establishment of the Anti-Corruption Commission, the National Social Security and Insurance Trust, the National Public Procurement Authority, the Office of National Security, the National HIV/AIDS Secretariat, restructuring of the Army and Police, reforming the civil service, the fiscal sector, the judiciary, the university system, local government administration, among others, attest to the importance my government accorded to the creation of relevant and sound

institutional arrangements to buttress our national development activities on every front.

I believe that this is the platform on which sustainable development is built. While the results may not be immediately tangible in every sphere, I must emphasise that this is the way development proceeds. It is necessary to lay solid foundations and in time the fruits of these activities will manifest themselves in various forms of socio economic development.

The inauguration of the interim stock exchange fits perfectly into this scheme of institutional development and its importance is far-reaching.

Let me remind you that we have adopted a development policy based on the private sector as the engine of growth. This engine will however not perform efficiently in the absence of the required supporting institutional framework. The creation of this framework is the responsibility of government. Hence the importance my government has always attached to the imperative of providing a sufficiently conducive environment to enhance private sector development.

The stock exchange is one of the pillars of this enabling framework. It is part of the apparatus that facilitates the channelling of financial resources to the private sector for the realisation of projects on a timely and cost-efficient basis. It constitutes an aspect of financial sector reform geared towards provision of medium and long term capital, thereby encouraging commercial and industrial investment which is not generally feasible without the development of a capital market.

The role of the stock exchange in mobilising domestic capital, attracting foreign capital and allocating resources on an efficient basis is well documented. Its establishment in Sierra Leone will facilitate the performance of these important functions. In addition, it will play a supportive role in the

privatisation process and create an avenue for long-term investment of funds by insurance companies and other entities whose operations require long-term commitments, such as NASSIT. It will contribute to increased productivity and consequently higher growth rates in the economy. It will support innovation and institutional change. It will enhance prospects for employment through its impact on investment and growth. It will contribute to a more even distribution of income. In this way, it will exert a positive influence on economic and social stability. It will enhance a greater measure of inclusiveness by enabling those presently outside the formal financial sector to take advantage of investment opportunities, thereby engendering a wider distribution of the national wealth.

The reasons why I have attached such importance to the establishment of a stock exchange in Sierra Leone, and hence to this launching ceremony, must by now be apparent. I am happy that the stock exchange will constitute part of the institutional legacy of my administration.

I consequently have much pleasure in inaugurating the Sierra Leone Stock Exchange. In doing so, I entertain the strong belief that though it would commence on a modest scale, it will assume greater stature over time, and the country will come to realise its potentials for a transformation of the financial infrastructure in the years to come.

I urge all Sierra Leoneans and all who operate in this economy to give the maximum support to our new stock exchange. With your support, the possibilities for inducing more efficient investment, for both the public and private sectors, will be more amply and speedily realised. This as I have stated earlier will translate into increased employment, higher living standards, and a more cohesive society and enhanced political, economic and social stability. Sierra Leone deserves no less and we must all ensure that she gets no less.

As I step aside from my leadership role in national politics, I wish the Sierra Leone Stock Exchange happy sailing in the financial seas of a globalised economy. And I wish all of you the greatest benefits that this institution can provide for enhanced national development and welfare.

Thank you for your attention.

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