

**STATEMENT**

*by*

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*at the*

**United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development  
(Rio+20)**

**Rio de Janeiro, 22 June 2012**

***Check Against Delivery***

Madame President,  
Excellencies

Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen!

Allow me on behalf of the Government and People of the Republic of Sierra Leone, extend our gratitude to you Madam President and, through you, to the Government and people of Brazil for hosting this conference, and for the warm and excellent hospitality accorded to our delegation.

We appreciate the time and effort of all governments, non-governmental organizations, civil society, the private sector and all people who, in diverse ways, have contributed to the organization of and participated in this second Rio Conference twenty years after.

Sierra Leone is gratified to be part of this Rio conference aimed at renewing our collective political commitment by firming up a plan of action that seeks to provide guidance on goals, tools, institutional reforms, technological cooperation and other means of implementation designed to set us firmly on a sustainable path to development.

My delegation aligns itself with the statement made by H. E. Denis Sassou Nguesso, President of the Republic of Congo, which is in consonance with the priorities defined by the African Union Summit and NEPAD as reflected in Africa's Common Position on Sustainable Development.

Madame President,

It is encouraging to note that despite many challenges, the Preparatory Committee can come out with a consensus on the process for our common vision of “the future we want”.

In reaffirming the Rio principles signed in 1992, including the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development and Agenda 21, the Plan of Implementation of the World Summit on Sustainable Development, agreed to in Johannesburg in 2002, the Barbados Programme of Action and the Mauritius Strategy for Implementation, full implementation of the Istanbul Programme of Action for Least Developed Countries, the Almaty Programme of Action for Landlocked Developing Countries, the Political Declaration on Africa’s development needs, and the New Partnership for Africa’s Development; we should in that regard, put into action our firm commitment to implementation, development cooperation and partnerships required to achieve progress. In that context, we must recognize the need for urgent concerted actions to restore and sustain the ability of the Earth to support human communities in an inclusive and equitable manner, ensure the long-term integrity of biodiversity and ecosystem services, and to mitigate environmental risks and scarcities guided by the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities.

Within this context, the LDCs, conflict, fragile and conflicted states, who are the most vulnerable group of the global community and are likely to remain off track in the achievement of the MDGs, should be given priority attention. Progress made in the economic, social and human development over the decades in these countries should be built upon through support to increased levels of social development, and building the productive capacity and infrastructure of these countries. To that end, the full implementation of the Istanbul Programme of Action for the decade

2011 – 2021, as well as supporting the New Deal of the g7+ countries which builds on the Dili Declaration and the New Partnership for Africa's Development and their effective integration into a global framework and post 2015 development agenda is critical to achieving sustainable development and a more secure world.

Madame President,

Sierra Leone has, since 2002, emerged from a decade long civil conflict to a country that is being cited as a success story of UN Peacebuilding and peace consolidation efforts. Despite the main challenges that we continue to face, Sierra Leone is a good example of how a country can move from conflict to a stable and peaceful democracy. Today, with support from our development partners, we have introduced policies to accelerate our interventions in the productive sectors and expand on our infrastructure, protect the environment and improve social safety nets.

In order to situate our development in a focused, coherent and prioritized framework, we developed the Agenda for Change in 2008; a five year development framework, which is our Second generation Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper with which the PBC, the UN country team and other development partners have realigned their strategies. The Agenda for Change prioritized Energy, Agriculture, Health and Education. Private sector and infrastructure development have also been areas of strong focus. This effort required us to make bold and sometimes risky investments to achieve our objectives. As a result, we have increased Grid distributed electricity some ten-fold and are on course to develop Hydro and Biomass as the core of our energy mix. Agricultural productivity has increased with improvements in food self-sufficiency, security and nutrition.

Indeed, Sierra Leone's efforts have been rewarded with our President and myself as Minister of Agriculture being named the Comprehensive African Agricultural Development Programme (CAADP) Champions of Africa.

We have launched new national parks to secure our rainforest and also established 15 protected areas to manage and secure our biodiversity. Our Free Health Care program for lactating and pregnant mothers and under five children has helped to significantly reduce infant and maternal mortality by half in just one year, and has yielded significant improvements for us on the UN Human Development Index. Primary, Secondary and Tertiary enrollments have risen significantly of late and the quality of the results of our candidates in external exams is also seriously improving. We have reduced the barriers to doing business. We launched the largest road construction program in the history of the country and have privatized our primary port. These and the highly favorable private sector investment incentives have resulted in increased foreign direct investments substantially over the years.

Madame President,

Despite these achievements, Sierra Leone continues to face multiple challenges in building capacities in the public and private sectors, providing access to safe drinking water to all, meeting the increasing demand for more infrastructural development, reducing food insecurity and poverty (MDG 1), addressing unemployment among the youths, improving healthcare, increasing investment in education, and institutional strengthening of the environmental protection agency. With the current global economic climate, the country has, like many others, been affected in its quest to attract substantial donor support for its development projects. Whilst some

support is being provided, it falls short of providing opportunities for the country to overcome basic conflict drivers.

Madame President,

To achieve our common vision, bold actions are required from all of us. In particular, international support from traditional and non-traditional donors as well as promoting south-south and triangular cooperation is critical to achieving sustainable development. To achieve progress on the three pillars of sustainable development and in line with country specific priorities, there is a need for technology transfer and more investment in infrastructure, agriculture and social facilities and services as well as providing further incentives for investment in the private sector.

Indeed, to talk about sustainable development without making specific provision for sustainable and affordable energy will be fatalistic. This is why Sierra Leone welcomes wholeheartedly the Secretary-General's "Sustainable Energy for All" initiative, and congratulates the high Level Working Group for work done, and financial commitments secured. Increased private sector participation in the energy delivery is prerequisite to achieving sustainable development and therefore, the public sector needs to develop risk mitigation tools and instruments that will encourage private capital to be allocated without sacrificing the need for efficiency and appropriate returns. The private sector must in turn, look at the long term predictable income streams that the energy sector offers; and not ignore the stability that most developing countries and emerging democracies now enjoy; and therefore price their risks reasonably.

In essence, the economic, social and environmental dimensions of sustainable development should be integrated in a comprehensive and holistic manner with measurable progress in the provision of

water, energy, food security and nutrition, promoting agriculture, and natural resource management, developing social and human capital as well as addressing our vulnerabilities while building resilience in the face of the increasing impact of climate change and other disasters such as desertification, sea level rise, melting of glaciers and coastal flooding.

Madame President,

The green economy presents new development opportunities which, in our view, should promote green jobs and enhance our capacity without constraining policy space to pursue a development path in accordance with national priorities and also not becoming a burden on development or conditionality for investments. In that regard, it is important that the transfer of new environmental and appropriate technology to developing countries in favourable terms, especially to the poor and vulnerable nations, be given due attention. Better still, green economy research, development and innovation should be harnessed in those economies which today (due to their lower levels of development) are de facto more green than advanced economies; and would want to contribute to knowledge development and already have the green competitive advantage in their favour. There is also an increasing need to strengthen institutional support mechanisms, in order to contribute to enhanced productivity that would lead to a low carbon but sustained inclusive and equitable growth. In particular, the capacity of national, sub-regional and regional institutions in line with national development priorities should be enhanced and strengthened.

The immediate way forward requires concerted effort by the international community to address endemic and abject poverty which could hinder the achievement of the overarching goal of

sustainable development. The Rio+20 Conference therefore presents a historic opportunity for defining our shared destiny and common future and renewing our political and resource will to the full implementation of these commitments as well as mapping out a realistic, focused, timely and coherent implementation mechanism. In that regard, we emphasize that the critical foundation for sustainable development should be based on strong institutions that will not only be able to effectively respond to existing and emerging challenges but also acknowledge the need to strengthen relevant measures within the context of efforts to reform the Institutional Framework for Sustainable Development. My delegation is therefore supportive of any effort by the international community to work towards transforming UNEP into a United Nations specialized Agency.

Madame President,

In conclusion, whilst acknowledging that some progress have been made in terms of our global readiness to arrive at a consensus outcome, this Rio Conference should put into place mechanisms that should keep us engaged in order to avoid backtracking on those commitments made twenty years ago.

To that end, Sierra Leone stands ready to contribute constructively and substantively and to partner with all in this process; and looks forward to a successful and promising outcome of this conference.

I thank you all.