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## The Republic of Sierra Leone

### State House Online



01 March 2005

H.E. President Alhaji Dr. Ahmad Tejan Kabbah

**LAUNCHING OF THE UN MILLENNIUM DEVELOPMENT PROJECT REPORT  
BY HIS EXCELLENCY THE PRESIDENT,  
ALHAJI DR AHMAD TEJAN KABBAH  
AT THE MIATTA CONFERENCE CENTRE,  
BROOKFIELDS  
ON MONDAY 24TH JANUARY 2005**

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Mr. Chairman  
Cabinet Ministers  
Honourable Members of Parliament  
Members of the Diplomatic and Consular Corps  
Mayor of Freetown and Chairman of Local Councils  
Heads of International Organisations  
Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen:

Today's launching of the Millennium Development Project Report provides an opportunity for me to reaffirm a commitment I made five years ago, as President to protect the people of Sierra Leone from debilitating ills such as extreme hunger, poverty and disease, by pursuing policies that are primarily designed to reduce poverty by half by the year 2015. This commitment, which was jointly made on behalf of the world's poor by world leaders, is known as the Millennium Declaration. The Declaration encapsulates eight (8) Development Goals which are commonly referred to as the MDGs. These goals have been thoroughly highlighted by previous speakers here today.



There has been considerable debate of all shades on the ambitious nature of the MDGs. There are those who say that the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) are unachievable, and will thus forever remain a dream. I hold a different viewpoint. Though the challenge that lies ahead is difficult, I am heartened by the fact that the MDGs represent tangible benchmarks toward which nations such as ours can aim. They establish yardsticks for measuring results, not just for developing countries but also for rich countries that help to fund development programs and for the multilateral institutions that help countries implement them.

The five year review of the MDGs reminds us that we in Sierra Leone lost ground due largely to our protracted and destructive civil conflict. We should nonetheless be commended as we have made considerable progress, as evident in the Vision 2025 document, the National Recovery Strategy and above all the recently finalized Poverty Reduction Strategy.

Despite the laudable efforts of many Governments, the harsh reality for sub-Sahara Africa is that achieving the MDGs is a monumental challenge. Indeed, this is what prompted the United Nation's Secretary General to take the bold step of commissioning the Millennium Development Project three (3) years ago. As you all know the goal of the project was to develop a comprehensive strategy for the attainment of the MDGs. This effort has been spearheaded by an international team of eminent development experts, policy makers and academics. It is hoped that their efforts, which have culminated in this report, will re-focus global awareness towards the plight of poor people, towards our individual responsibilities as low-income countries and also towards the need for developed countries to provide adequate and predictable levels of development assistance.

The individual responsibilities, which leaders like myself are addressing, include good governance, gender equity, sound financial management, accountability and transparency in our dealings with both our people and our development partners. These factors play a major role in determining the plight of our people.

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Instruments and avenues for much-needed and appropriate international interventions already exist through Overseas Development Assistance (ODA). Unfortunately however the current level of assistance provided globally hovers around only one-third of the agreed target of 0.7% of the combined Gross National Income of developed countries. A further difficulty lies in debt servicing, which continues to cripple low-income developing countries. Some of these nations spend 3 to 5 times more funds on debt servicing than they do on the provision of basic social services to their citizens. With such a skewed balance of fiscal expenditures it is extremely difficult to adequately address the plight of the poor while attempting to maintain macro-economic stability.

I have often commended the international community for the HIPC Initiative, which remains the most comprehensive and fast-track route to solving the debt crisis. However for most countries, it has been shown that even the enhanced version of HIPC provides an inadequate level of relief. This continued debt dilemma, coupled with the seeming impossibility of low-income countries to gain meaningful and equitable access to developed country markets clearly illustrates that the road ahead remains rocky.

For our part, in Sierra Leone I have initiated several specific reforms geared towards facilitating the achievement of the MDGs. As I stated earlier, my Government continues to ensure that our national strategies, embodied in the Vision 2025 document, the National Recovery Strategy, and the National Poverty Reduction Strategy, are also geared towards facilitating the achievement of the MDGs.

Above all our strategy during the war was that while prosecuting the war, we were also planning the recovery and reconstruction phase by designing projects for this phase. We are now at the stage of mobilising the necessary resources to implement all the projects that we have so far designed particularly in the sectors covered in the Millennium Development Goals. If we are able to sustain the interest and support of our international partners, and continue to pursue prudent policies and strategies we will be on track to achieve Goal Number (2) of universal primary education.

At the regional level, we are actively engaged in NEPAD and the African Union Initiative, that provide a platform through which we can continue to lobby our counterparts in the developed world for their inputs in the implementation of recovery programmes in Africa. Moreover, my Government is intensifying its efforts within ECOWAS towards achieving these goals at a sub-regional level.

Mr. Chairman, I note with delight that the completion of the Millennium Development Project Report coincides with the completion of our PRSP, which is Sierra Leone's major vehicle for achieving the MDGs. Hence it is our hope that this coincidence serves as a positive indicator of future success in accessing the funds required for the implementation of Sierra Leone's PRS when discussed at the forthcoming CG meeting scheduled for mid 2005.

In summary, I wish to underscore that the Millennium Development Goals are the most broadly supported specific poverty reduction targets ever established. Their significance to low-income countries such as Sierra Leone cannot be over-emphasized. I trust that the analyses, strategies, and recommendations provided in the Report will guide individual country implementation and surely enhance the achievement of the goals within the context of country specific material and human capacity. This report addressed the uneven achievements of the goals and has brought into focus the special circumstances of the various regions, their economies, inadequacies and strengths. It provides a blueprint for assisting in the achievement of the MDGs and thus keeping the plight of the poor on the global agenda. Let me therefore commend the work of the Millennium Development Project in paving the way forward for the realization of the MDGs.

Finally I wish to commend, and note our appreciation to, all the experts for their praise-worthy efforts. Special recognition must be given to the UN Secretary-General, Kofi Annan for commissioning the UN Millennium Project and for playing an unparalleled role in promoting the global fight against poverty. I now wish to personally thank the UN Country Team, under the leadership of Mr. Victor Angelo, for its contribution towards Sierra Leone's development efforts.

I thank you all for your attention.

**-End-**

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