

**KEYNOTE ADDRESS BY THE HONOURABLE VICE
PRESIDENT ALHAJI CHIEF SAM SUMANA
AT THE OFFICIAL LAUNCHING OF THE
SCALING UP NUTRITION (SUN) MOVEMENT
MIATTA CONFERENCE CENTRE
TUESDAY 2ND OCTOBER, 2012**

Mr. Chairman

**Your Excellency Mr. Antonio Monteiro, former
Head of State of Cape Verde and spouse**

Ministers of Government

Members of the Diplomatic and Consular Corps

**Representatives of International Organizations
and Multilateral Agencies**

Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen

**I bring you greetings and felicitations from His
Excellency the President, Dr. Ernest Bai Koroma. It
has behoved upon me once more to deputize him at
another high level meeting of this nature, and I do so
with a profound apology from our President for his
unavoidable absence.**

**Chairman, Ladies and Gentlemen, we are here to
launch the SCALING UP NUTRITION (SUN)
MOVEMENT IN SIERRA LEONE as a priority
programme for our country, in the fight against
hunger and malnutrition.**

Let me therefore reiterate the welcome courtesies of the Chairman and acknowledge our distinguished visitors, assuring them of our friendly hospitality. This launching ceremony today will officially confirm Sierra Leone's membership in a Movement that embraces countries committed to reducing high levels of malnutrition in children under the age of five years. Hunger and malnourishment inhibit the normal growth of a child and impede the ability to develop into adulthood for effective contribution in nation building.

Scientifically, it has been established that malnourished children grow up poorly and perform poorly in their educational pursuits. With limited education and skills their economic productivity in society will be limited. Under-nutrition deprives our country of much needed human resources for socio-economic transformation. Malnutrition breeds the circle of poverty in the household, community and at

national level. Malnourished children are likely to be intellectually impaired with diminished productive and creative capacity.

This is the reality that confronts us as a nation for which our Government is required to act decisively to ameliorate the prevalence bearing in mind that malnutrition is a preventable malaise. It is considered worldwide as the “Silent Emergency” that must be addressed with concerted efforts by governments to counter the scourge that is also generally regarded as a violation of children’s rights.

Mr. Chairman, we have just witnessed the performance of our children, the “Rapture Kids” drawing attention to the issue of under-nourishment of children and the urgent need for appropriate action from Government and Stakeholders for a brighter future of tomorrow’s nation builders.

Our Government is responsive to the needs of our people. The cry of the children is the concern of all of us and our response to that clarion call is the determination and commitment of Government to address problems that militate against the health and wellbeing of our children. We take full cognizance of the difficult challenges to tackle food insecurity and high infectious disease burden especially among the vulnerable sectors of our society.

Mr. Chairman, Ladies and Gentlemen, our Government is committed to the improvement of the quality of life for all Sierra Leoneans. This is encapsulated in our Government's Agenda for Change. It is that steadfast change that brought into operation the Free Health Care Initiative targeting pregnant women, lactating mothers and children under five years of age. Since its introduction into our health care system, accompanied by a vigorous nationwide campaign, I am pleased to report a

significant reduction in maternal and child mortality across Sierra Leone.

Accessibility to food for our people is of vital concern to our Government. Food shortages arise during the planting season when our farmers do not have easy access to sufficient daily food. To ameliorate this situation, our Government has introduced the Small holder Commercialization Programme, aimed at reducing rural poverty and household food insufficiency on a sustainable basis. The programme is also promoting farming as a business venture to improve rural household incomes and developing schemes for diversified local food production and consumption in our rural areas where the majority of our people live.

The challenge we now face as a Government to fully implement the Small holder Commercialization Scheme, rests with the mobilization of sufficient funds to support scale-up nutrition interventions in most needy areas. We therefore call upon all

Stakeholders from the private sector, donor community, NGOs, Civil Society, International Organizations, to partner with our Government in capacitating the scaling-up nutrition programme.

Our determination to be a member of the SUN Movement is to join hands with this global initiative that brings together countries burdened by hunger and under-nutrition for a concerted approach to eradicate hunger and malnutrition. Our Government supports the SUN Movement's multi-Stakeholder and country-led approach tackling hunger and malnutrition in member countries. The convening of this launching programme of the SUN Movement in Sierra Leone is therefore timely and appropriate.

The presence of our International Partners at this launching ceremony underscores the objective that, we can collaborate to fight hunger and malnutrition to achieve socio-economic growth and prosperity for our people. Our Government has already designed the structures at various levels, Districts, Chiefdoms

right down to village committees to ensure the success of SUN Movement in our nation.

Our National Food and Nutrition Steering Committee under my Chairmanship within the Office of the Vice President, will be the focal point with powers to advocate, mobilize resources, review progress, arbitrate and give a strategic direction on nutrition programmes.

Members of this Steering Committee who are the Ministers of key Government Ministries and other Stakeholder institutions have today signed the Commitment Document to reduce hunger and malnutrition in our country. Our international partners have also contributed to the signing of the Commitment Document as moral guarantors to demonstrate our collective will and determination to eradicate hunger and malnutrition in supporting one another.

Mr. Chairman, Ladies and Gentlemen, launching the SUN Movement today is an auspicious occasion for the people of Sierra Leone especially the women and children who are targeted as prime beneficiaries.

Our Government will ensure that the Programme succeeds with the understanding that A WELL NOURISHED AND HEALTHY POPULATION MAKES A PROSPEROUS NATION.

Within the next twelve months after this launching, our Government will ensure that our strategic plan to roll-out the SUN Initiative will operationalize and coordinate the following:-

- (i) Setting up of a Secretariat to provide technical support to the National Food and Nutrition Steering Committee; ensure effective Ministerial and Senior level participation and commitment and to roll out SUN at District levels.**

- (ii) Mobilize resources from key actors and sectors to reinforce a nutrition and multi-sectoral approach.**
- (ii) Develop a Monitoring and Evaluation framework.**
- (iii) Developing a National Code for marketing breast milk substitutes.**
- (v) Establish a nutritional food fortification alliance.**

The aforesaid objectives can only be achieved through partnership with the SUN Movement members and our Development Partners. That cooperative spirit should help us to strengthen coordination and make the best use of the technical assistance from all sectors.

The SUN Movement can also assist us to share experiences in our roll-out strategy and developing an effective monitoring and evaluation framework. Above all, we earnestly anticipate the cooperation and support of SUN membership to seek financial

assistance for nutritional intervention in Sierra Leone. We therefore entreat all Sierra Leoneans at every sector of society to support this initiative.

We have no doubt that our international partners will compliment our efforts if we roll out the implementation of SUN Movement in a strategic manner with visible signs of success along the way in tackling hunger and under-nourishment.

On this note, Mr. Chairman, Ladies and Gentlemen, I now have the honour on behalf of His Excellency the President, Dr. Ernest Bai Koroma to formally launch the Scaling Up Nutrition (SUN) Movement and to wish all Sierra Leoneans success in its implementation.

Thank you for your attention.