

SLOF ry & Ebola Campaign Partners' Meeting in Helsinki, Finland
November 13, 2015

STATEMENT by H.E. E. TURAY

As a country, Sierra Leone has faced many challenges, and each time, we are determined, as a nation, that we will not be defined by these occurrences.

Nearly a decade ago, it was a civil war which ended in 2002 – leaving in its trail untold atrocities. More recently it has been the scourge of Ebola, which for many has been their introduction to Sierra Leone – but, we have shown time and again that we can rise, recover and overcome challenges that always seem to be insurmountable.

As I look back at the devastation caused by Ebola and path to recovery, it serves us well to also look back at the strides we made in various sectors before Ebola. The virus has caused unprecedented social and humanitarian damage, accompanied by severe economic consequences. It remarkably decreased the impressive gains we made in economic growth over the years, as farmers, teachers, investors, and a range of economic agents have extensively been affected by the epidemic.

Ladies and gentlemen, our recovery strategy is guided and encouraged by our conviction that, while we have been negatively challenged by the virus, there are great opportunities we must not waste time to capture – the opportunity to reflect on what we could have done better to prevent the persistence of the disease and the opportunity to review our policies and systems now, not only in mainstream health sector, but holistically, so that we can emerge from the disease with a social and economic strength that will see us flourish more than ever before.

Ladies and gentlemen, we appeal to you for your continued support for 1) A strong and effective healthcare system supported by regional and global disease surveillance networks; the virus may remain latent in the region – we ask you to support our post-disaster recovery programmes, integrated systems and processes to ensure that the disease surveillance is improved, health systems are built back better.

For this to happen, we believe that effective communication and information management and decentralized health delivery systems will be critical. Related to this are effective incentives and payment systems for health workers,

environmentally sound healthcare waste management, institutionalization of health monitoring, effective and targeted social protection among other measures.

We found that Ebola was an unforgiving and frightening disease – but we also found out that it can be defeated – by working together in solidarity and with effective coordination.

On behalf of my government, the entire nation of Sierra Leone, and Sierra Leonean Diaspora in Finland, please accept our sincere thanks and never-to-be-forgotten your massive support lavished on us in defeating Ebola. I thank in particular the 32 Finnish volunteers who physically “hob-nubed” with our people in Kenema and Kono districts, despite the huge possibility of been infected by the disease.

I thank you for listening to me.

H. E. Edward Turay