

“STRENGTHENING PARLIAMENTS IN CONFLICT/POST-CONFLICT
SITUATIONS. SIERRA LEONE – A CASE STUDY”
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INTRODUCTION: INDEPENDENCE AND STATEHOOD

Sierra Leone won her independence from Britain on 27 April 1961 and was admitted to the United Nations Organization as its 100th member. She had come to her new status of statehood by peaceful means, through negotiations with her colonial master. She, like other similar former colonies, inherited at independence institutions and practices that had been forged on the anvil of colonial rule which largely excluded politics, or rather defined it in administrative terms. The system of indirect rule that undergirded the colonial administration allowed for the continued exercise of chiefly authority but by this token pitched chiefs against the aspirations of the burgeoning young and educated elites. Although largely muted and controlled by the administration, there was a struggle for power or recognition between these two elements that was accentuated after independence. Colonial rule was essentially authoritarian in practice until literally in the morrow of independence was transmogrified into a parliamentary democracy. There was not sufficient time in which the inheritors of the colonial mantle were to unlearn what they had been schooled in and must now in the new dawn imbibe a democratic ethos, honed to produce dedicated, tolerant, transparent, and accountable public servants. Nevertheless, the fledgling institutions of parliament, the civil service and Fourth Estate provided a forum for articulating different viewpoints and even the forging of a kind of nationalist consensus. Unlike the masters who had exercised total control over resources and people the nationalist successors must struggle to relinquish such control and learn accountability. As the state was at the centre of control it became the target or locus of the struggle for power, its exercise, resources. Democracy at this nascent stage, in the African context, was, according to the late Nigerian analyst, Claude Ake, **“still pre-industrial and communal and whose cultural idiom is radically different – a society whose members are barely surviving on informal activities and subsistence farming”** (‘The unique case of African democracy,’ *International Affairs* 69, No.2, pp.239-244. 1993). The new elites were inclined to establish their hegemonic interests and legitimize their ascendancy along ethnic or tribal lines. They placed their personal, ethnic and communal ties above putative national interests. Since those days the state has fallen under the burden of these heavy demands to earn itself such epithets as weak, predatory, parasitical, crony, kleptocratic, patrimonial, and paradoxical.

The state is paradoxical because its weaknesses and other negative attributes belie its magnified pseudo power and deceptively pretentious structures and grandiose schemes and vaunted plans. It was, as Ake aptly put it, **“inordinately powerful and pitifully irrelevant.”** The patrimonial dimension is also evident and some of its salient features are depicted as follows:

- **“Predominance of personalized informal institutions (including family, ethnic groups, political groups) over formal institutions (for example, constitutionally mandated entities such as elections, legislatures, judiciaries, civil services) in prescribing and enforcing norms related to gaining and exercising power**

- **Private appropriation of the state's "public" authority**
- **Distribution of state-generated benefits by ruling elites to personal and political followers**
- **Selection of public officials based on personal ties**
- **Relatively low levels of control and accountability applied to rulers' use of the state's coercive powers and management of its wealth**
- **Unwillingness by ruling elites to distinguish between the personal and the public domains."** (Mark Schachter, 'Sub-Sahara Africa: Lessons from Experience in Supporting Sound Governance,' ECD Working Paper Series, Number 7, February 2000, p.5).

Sierra Leone entered the post-independence era with Sir Milton Margai as Prime Minister (1957 – 1964), riding on the crest of a wave of national optimism and expectations for a new dawn, for a transition to a robust democracy, orderly rule and impressive economic growth. She held her first post-independence elections in 1962 but the following ones in 1967 stand out very distinctly. They would have added kudos to her accomplishments when the opposition All Peoples Congress party (APC) defeated the governing Sierra Leone Peoples Party (SLPP) under Sir Albert Margai (1964 – 1967) at the polls; the first such feat in post-colonial Africa. This was however not to be as the country was subjected to her first military coup, went into a tailspin, crash landed and began to gather herself in 1968 when power was restored to the winners of 1967, the then Prime minister, Siaka Stevens (1968 – 1971, President: 1971 – 1985), and his APC. Since then Sierra Leone has vacillated and oscillated in electoral spasms that were frequently very violent indeed, papered over with post-elections realignments, reconciliation and recovery efforts until an unprecedented burst of determination re-launched her in 1996 to join the comity of democratic nations. These spasmodic jolts kept shaking the state structure out of joint and it was teetering on the brink of disintegration when in March 1991 the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) struck a near fatal blow. Whilst in most respects the RUF inflicted untold mayhem and misery, it was also in an important sense a symptom of the socio-political and economic detritus that had already set in and was wracking the body politic. It opens up and gives us a unique glimpse into the accumulated legitimacy deficit in the system. That there was some respite in 1996 sufficient enough to permit of the holding of elections is in itself spectacular and bespeaks the resilience, sheer doggedness and irrepressible political will of the populace, as well as the residue of an institutional framework on which to build. Sierra Leone would not die; she was determined to survive as a democratic nation. Indeed, the great tragedy of the civil conflict in this country is that in one and the same breath, almost paradoxically, it highlights the strengths and weaknesses, successes and failures of the democratic experiment.

THE ROOTS OF THE CONFLICT

The roots of the conflict that raged in and ravaged the country so extensively and destructively for over a decade, from March 1991 to its formal ending in January 2002, are generally believed to lie in poor governance which was responsible for a disappearing formal economy, youth unemployment, grinding poverty, poor education and a weak infrastructure.

As Sylvia Fletcher, Senior Governance Advisor, United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)-Sierra Leone, observed in her presentation to the Eastern region Governance Round-Table in Kenema, September 10, 2002, **“Sierra Leoneans seem to agree that two fundamental causes of the decade-long war are bad governance, leading to the collapse of state authority and services, and “disenfranchisement” of youth, including massive illiteracy and lack of job opportunities. If this is true, then Sierra Leone does not have the conditions for lasting peace today; it has temporary stability, perhaps due to fatigue and depletion of assets of war, and international assistance to defer or contain the eruption of violence. To build lasting peace, good governance needs to be created and youth need opportunities for a better life, through education and income-generating employment.”** (in “Opening Session: Asking Why? Pp.2-3).

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF ELECTIONS

The late President Siaka Stevens once referred to elections in Sierra Leone as quinquennial warfare. He was not wrong, for indeed elections have always been fought over, including in unconventional, even violent, ways because there is a lot at stake. The winners take all and the losers not only lose all but they and their kinfolk suffer a lot too. Therefore, there has been a tendency to rig or steal elections, to go to Parliament or State House by any means. It is against this background that we must perceive Parliament and work out how to strengthen it. From the foregoing comments it is suggested that the legitimacy of our Parliaments since 1967 has been questionable at best. To say this is by no means to denigrate, rather to emphasize from the outset that since elections are the bedrock of Parliaments, we must bear in mind that our Parliaments are already fraught with serious problems at birth. The first, big and extremely significant challenge is ensuring that elections are indeed free, fair and free of fear so that the Parliaments they birth will be vested with moral integrity, as the electorate’s verdict, and the MPs as the people’s tribune. So many of our crises and conflicts will be lessened if the governing class will allow itself to be anointed with this vesture of popular approbation. Then they will be true trustees of the popular will.

In short, we have had elections and Parliaments with varying degrees of legitimacy, depending on how flagrant or concealed the abuse of the electoral process has been. Elections are only as good as the conditions under which they are held. Like the state, of which Parliament is an essential component in its overall architecture, Parliament or the legislature in Sierra Leone has gone through a diversity of mutations. From the first post-independence House of some 73 representatives, we now have a Parliament of 124 members. Between 1967 and 1996 members were elected on a first-past-the-post constituency basis, with a single member representing a constituency the boundaries of which were usually drawn or re-drawn before an election. As a result of the fact that no census had been taken for quite a considerable while, a situation not helped by the civil war, a novel system, the District Block, was introduced in 1996 whereby political parties draw up lists from which groups of members are chosen to represent their district.

It is not yet clear if or when we will be returning to the constituency pattern of voting, as the matter is being debated, although the newly appointed chairperson of the National Electoral Commission (NEC) is reported in the press to have promised a return to the former pattern. Apart from the increase in membership, Parliament has experienced change in other ways: a republic with an Executive President was declared in April 1971 and a one-party state was promulgated in June 1978. Until the re-introduction of multi-party democracy in 1996 the President had appointed his Ministers from members of his party represented in Parliament and they occupied the front benches. Section 56 (1) of the 1991 Constitution however stipulates that **“no Member of Parliament shall be appointed a Minister or Deputy Minister;”** in consequence of which the President and his ministers can no longer sit in parliament as in the past.

During this period of mutation, thus, Parliament has changed from a multi-party (up to 1978) to a single-party chamber (up to 1996); was suspended under the military rule of the National Provisional Ruling Council (NPRC) 1992-1996; and restored to multi-party democracy in 1996. Since we attained independence in 1961 Parliament has predominantly been composed of the two principal, rival parties, the currently governing party, SLPP, which led the country to independence and was in power until the elections of 1967, and the minority opposition party, APC. The APC was founded as the Elections before Independence Movement and transformed into a political party on July 9, 1960. The Sierra Leone Parliament has also not been spared the vicissitudes of virulent party competition. Stories abound of prospective opposing candidates invited to breakfast with party bosses and kept literally as prisoners as their departure to either present themselves as candidates or to vote is prevented; of hijacked ballots and ballot boxes stuffed with stolen ballots; and other shenanigans too numerous and diverse to enumerate.

CONCEPTUALIZATION OF PARLIAMENT

A Sample Orientation Training Handbook prepared by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) defines Parliament as **“the people’s branch of government, the institution where citizen interests and preferences are expressed and transformed into policy, and the point which, at least potentially, people most closely engage their national government.... (Legislatures) fulfill a number of important functions in a democracy: they represent people and groups, reflecting and bringing their needs, aspirations, problems, concerns, and priorities to the policymaking and policy-amending process; they make laws, the rules that govern a nation; and they practice oversight, assuring that laws and programs are carried out legally, effectively, and according to legislative intent.”** In another, not unrelated context, at a meeting organized by the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) in co-operation with the UNDP, held in Libreville, Gabon, from 17 to 19 May 1999, African Parliamentarians adopted guidelines on the rights and duties of the opposition in Parliament. The hope was that from these guidelines would be derived draft rules that will govern the functioning of African Parliamentary assemblies. Among other things, the guidelines state that, **“4. Parliament is the institution that embodies society in the diversity of its composition and its opinions and which relays and channels this diversity in the political process.**

Its vocation is to regulate tensions and maintain equilibrium between the competing claims of diversity and uniformity, individuality and collectivity, in order to enhance social cohesion and solidarity. Its role is to legislate, *inter alia* by allocating financial resources, and oversee the action of the Executive. 5. Parliament must accommodate the participation of all people in homogeneous as well as heterogeneous societies in order to safeguard diversity, pluralism and the right to be different in a climate of tolerance. Hence the importance of political forces and individuals representing the opposition being able to participate in the work of parliament. This will require recognition of and respect for human rights in general as well as for their specific rights and duties.”

The Sierra Leone Parliament derives its legislative, supervisory and consultative powers from the 1991 Constitution. According to Section 73(2) and (3), **“Subject to the provisions of this Constitution, the legislative power of Sierra Leone is vested in Parliament....Parliament may make laws for the peace, security, order and good governance of Sierra Leone.”** For the exercise of its supervisory powers, the Constitution provides for the establishment of Standing Committees and **“it shall be the duty of any such Committee...to investigate or inquire into the activities or administration of such Ministries or Departments as may be assigned to it, and such investigation or inquiry may extend to proposals for legislation...Notwithstanding anything contained in subsections (1) and (2) [i.e. appointment of Standing and other Committees], Parliament may at any time appoint any other Committee to investigate any matter of public importance.”** (Section 93(3) and (4)). Furthermore, the Constitution stipulates that **“the Cabinet shall be collectively responsible to Parliament for any advice to the President by or under the general authority of the Cabinet and for all things done by or under the authority of any Minister in the execution of his office.** (Section 60(1)). As to the consultative powers that the Constitution vests in Parliament various Sections are relevant, such as:

- Passing Bills proposed by Government (Sections 105 and 106).
- Confirming the Executive’s nominees for public office (Sections 56(2)(c), 70, 153, 157).
- Authorizing taxation, appropriation and expenditure (Sections 110, 111(3) and (4), 112).
- Approving loans and the conditions and mode of repayment (Section 118).
- Notification of all gifts, donations, grants and pledges made to the state (Section 118(7)).

This conceptualization of the role of Parliament that accepts its representativeness, law-making and oversight functions, is apposite in examining its relevance or applicability to the Sierra Leonean problematic; to a Sierra Leone that is at the bottom of the Human Development Index, despite a remarkably enviable resource endowment; and that has witnessed a breakdown and dysfunction and manifested in war a malevolence that is mind-boggling. I have already alluded to the phenomenon of rigged or stolen elections.

If Parliament is supposed to be the embodiment of society, to regulate tensions, and enhance societal cohesion and solidarity, then the people who compose it should truly have been elected by their electorate in order to be able to claim to be legitimately speaking for them. This lies at the heart of the crisis that broke out in Sierra Leone, raged for eleven years, and we still have to deal with. Parliamentary debates are supposed to be lively affairs animated by concern and care for the health of the nation and a desire to solve the diverse problems that afflict the people and are channeled to their representatives. Once upon a time such debates ranged over a wide swathe of issues and sought to articulate and be expressive of the interests of the citizenry, and which then translated into or were transformed into policy, were robust and exciting, engaged in by practitioners who had the gift of the gab and demonstrated a consciousness of the immense challenges they have to face as trustees of the people. Even where they played to the gallery, at least there was a gallery to play to and their antics were followed with keen interest.

The extent to which Parliament has over the years been able to or successful in accommodating the participation of all people in the polity in order to safeguard diversity, pluralism and the right to be different in a climate of tolerance is determined by the reality or genuineness of the people's choice of representatives, the Parliamentary mechanisms extant for the expression of views and preferences or even dissent, and the way MPs as individuals or collectively participate or allow the people to impact them. The record in this regard leaves much to be desired, and not only with regard to the one-party era and the residue it has left to this day. The huge majority of the governing party in the present Parliament and the way the agenda is manipulated and votes are taken speak of a lop-sided process and outcome. In this regard, and more especially in respect of the recognition of and respect for human rights, we must welcome the establishment of the Parliamentary Committee on Human Rights, the work it has started doing, and the support it is receiving most particularly from UNDP. The emphasis of the latter support so far is the development of Parliamentary leadership on issues based reforms, the Committee's capability to carry out its mandate, and the setting up of the Committee's offices from which it can work effectively. This is at this moment seen as a case study, not something systematic, hopefully to develop expertise on working in Committee on technical matters and that can be replicated elsewhere in the Parliamentary process. As the UNDP Senior Governance Officer emphasized, what is being offered is not structural assistance to Parliament as an integrated institution but partial and on issues basis, in this particular of human rights. She went on to make the crucial point that whilst the other Committees, e.g. health, finance, have Ministries, there is no Ministry of Human Rights, the absence of which makes such intervention and support as is rendered by UNDP at this time quite significant. Human rights are so important and their impact so pervasive that the value of their promotion and defence cannot be underestimated. It is to be hoped that the expected outcome of developed leadership in this important aspect will emerge to serve as an example to be emulated and replicated in other spheres.

As one interviewee observed, Parliament is as good as the caliber of the people who compose it. Parliamentarians must have the capacity and capability to capture the mood of those they represent, be impacted by their needs, aspirations, problems, as well as their concerns and be able to process and churn them out as transformative policies or actions. If the governance that is much talked about is to be effective or meaningful at all, there is an unquestionable need for an effective and efficient Parliament that sets out to perform optimally to meet people's expectations. There must not be a disconnect between representative and represented, but an ongoing fellowship based on mutual trust, respect, and solicitude. The quality or caliber of Parliamentarians is therefore one necessary requirement, a sine qua non, for an effective Parliament. There is broad agreement that there has not been a constant or consistent flow of high caliber personages into Parliament since those halcyon days; that the caliber has in fact declined since the 1996 intake that is the product of the new system of proportional representation. It would seem that this decline is not unrelated to the growing fault-lines in the body politic, corresponding with a marked deterioration in the quality of leadership, consumed by rapacious greed and wickedness such as the war brought to light. The original surge and thrust toward nation building and the predilection for legitimacy that informed the commitment, if not the reality of the practice, of welfare or development-oriented policies in such areas as health, education and justice became attenuated with time until the war revealed the true nature and extent of obvious failure and dysfunction. The attainment of independence held out the heady prospects of the promotion of enhanced health, social, welfare and educational provision. It was also expected that the nation was entering the new dawn of welding and melding the various tribes into one united nation. But these hopes were overtaken over time by rampant greed, corruption and abuse of office and miscarriage of justice that escalated and worsened and became so conflictual that they gave rise to or found expression in violence and war.

SIERRA LEONE UNDER ONE-PARTY RULE

The period of one-party rule (1978 – 1992) is quite emblematic of the challenges that have faced state institutions, especially Parliament; and in numerous ways the present Parliament in a restored multi-party democracy and in which the ruling party has an overwhelming majority offers quite interesting similarities. The executive in the single party era, particularly so President Stevens, so dominated the stage and manipulated the system that almost every other state institution apart from the presidency was emasculated. This was the time during which politics was gladiatorial and elections, in particular, as the president himself acknowledged, decidedly became just plain fights, degenerating into routine warfare conducted by political warlords as coveted seats in Parliament were contested for without the restraints of procedures and the rules of the game. Politics was turned to the unflattering quest to gain access to and extract resources for patrimonial distribution and patronage; a predatory competition to seize and control power for its own sake, especially the pump and pageantry, and the rich spoils. It was personalized at the same time as violence and intimidation were injected into it and institutions atrophied and lost repute. The economy was plundered and mismanaged to an extent that most of it disappeared into informality and black marketeering and out of the control of officialdom and reach of the average citizen.

Tribal affiliation was politicized and accentuated rivalries, transparency and accountability diminished, and the contours of political and bureaucratic corruption expanded to dimensions that provided the basis for dissatisfaction and disaffection, and the trigger for the violent eruption that eventuated in March 1991. The democratic foundation on which nationalist aspirations were pinned and the state edifice had been constructed was thus destroyed and the superstructure severely shaken.

As can be imagined, notwithstanding this somber picture of the one-party regimen, there were positive developments, especially in the area of infrastructure, such as the Chinese built national stadium, ministerial building and police headquarters, road construction, and, crucially, ethnic bonding. During President Momoh's reign from 1985 until his overthrow in 1992, Parliament strove valiantly not to be a mere rubber stamp assembly. A group of members of caliber who had been left out of or dropped from the cabinet banded together and mounted efforts to take an independent stand on issues and to improve the quality of debates in the House. A strong Backbenchers' Association was formed and became so potent and vocal in articulating issues that it was listened to. On a number of occasions when ministers wanted to introduce bills in Parliament they either had to first canvass support from the backbenches before doing so or were faced with the stark and embarrassing reality of being stopped. In one notable instance, the country was in dire economic straits and government was under pressure to succumb to the International Monetary Fund (IMF's) conditionalities. Whilst President Stevens had stoutly refused to accept them, his anointed successor, President Momoh (1985 – 1992), decided to embrace them in acknowledgement that haphazard measures were no longer workable. The Momoh administration wanted in this connection to introduce very stringent Economic Emergency Regulations in order to arrest the wayward, runaway foreign exchange regime, regulate the importation of essential commodities, and the export, mainly, of diamonds that were being wantonly exploited and smuggled to the detriment of the nation. The members of the Backbenchers' Association rebelled against the proposed measures and refused to play ball. Appreciating that bringing the Regulations straight to the floor of Parliament in the expectation that they will simply be rubberstamped will meet with fierce resistance, government was compelled to meet with the backbenchers and try to cajole them to acquiesce. It was not an easy sell and the debate in the House was quite heated and opinion among the backbenchers was divided. Although the measure was passed, it was not surprising that the Regulations collapsed after only six months. The portents for this kind of vibrancy were pretty promising as backbench revolt on issues increased. Perhaps this vibrancy was explained principally by the caliber of the members, their boldness anchored on the fact of transition from Stevens to Momoh, and the relative willingness to permit of such in a one party environment in which it is easier to manage or control dissent if it threatens to go out of hand. But the NPRC coup of 1992, bringing with it the suspension of both the Constitution and Parliament, put paid to an otherwise interestingly promising trend in democratic praxis.

NPRC OUSTER OF THE APC

This exceptional development notwithstanding, the economy was in pretty bad shape by now, institutions of state weakened, corruption pervasive and undermining the fabric of society, and security so compromised that when the RUF declared its war in 1991, there was little readiness or capability to respond as appropriately as the heinous war required. An additional complicating factor was the SLPP as a nationalist party. Having been denied power and retreated into sulking in the political wilderness since 1967, it had to live under an APC-run one-party state that a former SLPP Prime Minister, Sir Albert Margai (1964 – 1967), had unsuccessfully wanted to foist on the nation in 1965. The party was suspected and accused of being behind the rebellion. Thus when the rebellion originated from the heartland of the SLPP and Mendedom, in Kailahun, it was widely felt that it was a Mende affair, what amounted to a conspiracy against Limbas in particular, or broadly speaking northern rule. This added to the ethnic tension and divisiveness. The APC was headed by a Limba, an ethnic group that had for long been despised, now provided the nation with leadership, but also, like the Mendes in the 60s accused of practicing tribal hegemony. Because the Limba inhabit the north, this accusation was extended to Northerners. In this circumstance, the government was said to be uninterested in or unenthusiastic about prosecuting the war because it was perceived that the Mende got what they bargained for; for their subversion; in other words, it served them right. For their part, the Mende felt marginalized and excluded and their region condemned to destruction. The public, especially in the capital, Freetown, saw reported events in the warfront as so distant and from such a jaundiced perspective that it somewhat believed that the war will be limited to where it had started. This complacency continued whilst the war was panning out until it literally stole up on the rest of the country. It was during this state of suspended animation that the government was overthrown on April 29, 1992 on the pretext that it failed to protect the nation from the rebels and the havoc they were wreaking on innocent people and property. The concomitance of developments surrounding the coup caused the finger of accusation to again be pointed at the Mende, particularly as they predominated in the new post-APC regime.

Apart from some incidences of youthful indiscretion and excesses, the NPRC captivated the population, offered and symbolized hope that had been lost and the prospects of starting anew on the path to democratic recovery. The setting up of Commissions of Inquiry to investigate corruption and diverse forms of malfeasances signaled an attempt to bring miscreant stealers and wasters of public resources to book and the promise of deterring others from indulging in same in the future, at the same time enthroning probity in the public domain. This was buoyed up by the establishment of the National Advisory Council to work out modalities for and advise the military on the return to democratic governance. Doubts began to grow however about the military's commitment to handing power back to civil authority. The palace coup that saw the replacement of Valentine Strasser (1992 – 1996) by Julius Maada Bio as Chairman of the NPRC on 16 January, 1996 fuelled these doubts and were only lessened when the way opened for the negotiations with the RUF that culminated in the signing of the Abidjan Peace Accord between the incoming SLPP government and the RUF on November 30, 1996.

Because we are concerned here with Parliament, this is not the place to dwell on the NPRC beyond re-stating that it was under it that peace negotiations commenced to be taken up and finalized by the government led by the current President, Ahmad Tejan Kabbah.

1996 PRESIDENTIAL AND PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS

One significant point to note at this juncture is that the 1996 Presidential and General elections were conducted largely because of combined pressure from political parties, civil society and the international community. Although the NPRC had by 1995 formed a political party, the National Unity Party (NUP) and thereby gave the impression that they were willing to participate in elections, they were at the same time clandestinely canvassing postponement of the elections, with the argument that peace necessarily had first to be secured. War had not yet ceased, parts of the country were still under rebel control, hence outside the authority of government, and many citizens were either living abroad as refugees or displaced, thus disenfranchised. Pressure was irresistible for holding elections and seeing the back of the military that the NPRC was compelled to yield. As a matter of convenience, the decision was taken to introduce a proportional representation system in place of the constituency pattern that had been hitherto operated and the electorate was most familiar with. The ensuing elections were funded by the U.K. and monitored by Commonwealth observers. After winning the election and although he should have appointed his ministers from outside Parliament in conformity with the 1991 Constitution's stipulation, the President however went ahead to appoint some 28 newly elected Parliamentarians: 20 SLPP; 5 Peoples Democratic Party (PDP); 1 NUP; and 1 Democratic Centre Party (DCP). These then had to resign their seats and were replaced by members on the electoral list that had been voted on. Many of them were later dropped in a Cabinet reshuffle and thereby lost the opportunity of continuing to participate fully in active politics since they were unable to return to Parliament. Of greater import, President Kabbah appointed as ministers some MPs of the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) as compensation for helping him secure the presidency. Above all, the 1996 Parliament saw a situation in which the SLPP, although forming the government, was nevertheless in the minority. The sum total of opposition parties constituted a majority and spoke collectively through the Minority Leader, who was the leader of the United National Peoples Party (UNPP). The SLPP won 27 seats, UNPP 17 seats, PDP 12 seats, APC 5 seats, NUP 4 seats, and DCP 3 seats. It was from him that election was generally believed to have been stolen or falsified through massive vote-rigging. The nation was just adjusting to this series of developments when open schisms emerged to threaten the cohesion of the UNPP, but even worse, when the May 1997 coup of the Armed Forces Revolutionary Council (AFRC) happened, prisoners were set free from the Pademba Road Maximum Prisons, rebels of the RUF were invited to join the regime, and most of the government and Parliament went into exile, most of them to Conakry, Guinea.

PARLIAMENT, THE ABIDJAN PEACE ACCORD AND THE KAMAJOR MILITIA

Before these occurrences, Parliament had been faced with certain thorny issues. The first of these was the Abidjan Peace Accord which was supposed to have been laid before Parliament for ratification but was not. MPs complained about this, backing their arguments with the constitutional provisions of Section 40(4) which states

“that any Treaty, Agreement or Convention executed by or under the Authority of the President which relates to any matter within the legislative competence of Parliament, or which in any way alters the law of Sierra Leone or imposes any charge on, or authorizes any expenditure out of, the Consolidated Fund or any other fund of Sierra Leone, and any declaration of war made by the President shall be subject to ratification by Parliament –

- i) by an enactment of Parliament; or**
- ii) by a resolution supported by the votes of not less than one-half of the Members of Parliament.”**

The Agreement was neither presented to Parliament for ratification or consideration nor was Parliament involved in its implementation. Since the instrumentality for operationalizing the Agreement had to come from Parliament, whatever success that may have been possible was thus jeopardized. Government in this early period, in which it had no majority in Parliament and not developed the confidence it was later to display, was not willing, or maybe even able, to take chances. Besides, there was no international pressure, such as later developed, on which parliamentarians could rely. A similar situation has arisen with regard to the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP), which after being canvassed throughout the country Government is refusing to table before Parliament and this is drawing protests both inside and out of Parliament. It is hoped that the international community's disposition will lend the necessary support to the efforts of MPs in this matter. Another thorny issue had to do with the pressure that government came under and in turn transferred to Parliament to indemnify or give immunity to the NPRC. Parliament was reluctant to grant this and in order to have its way the government threatened that it will not release money that it had promised Parliamentarians to assist them in purchasing private vehicles. This threat however worked and the MPs yielded by granting the immunity. The third issue was most critical, it concerned the government's decision to disband the national army, elements of which had been alleged or found to collude with the rebels, the so-called *sobel*s. Government's intention was to replace the army with the *kamajor* militia, i.e. traditional hunters that had been trained, financed and equipped at the expense of and to the detriment of the army. They constituted a rival force to the national army and were virtually the military wing of the SLPP. This became more irksome as at the same time as these militias were retained, those in the North, the *Tamaboros* and *Kapras*, were disbanded. Parliament stood firmly against this and the President was compelled to reverse the decision. Up to this point Parliament, more particularly the opposition, seemed to enjoy a great deal of scope for exercising its own authority and power, even as its unity was already beginning to unravel.

When both the government and Parliament returned from their temporary exile in February 1998, government effected an undisguised vengeance in the violent ouster of the AFRC.

Whereas previously, before the coup, people who had supported a negotiated peace saw Parliament and its members as the champions of the cause of peace, the environment now radically changed. Proponents of the pacific option at best ran the risk of stigmatization as rebels or, if unlucky, be lynched by violent, marauding mobs. The hardliners, in and out of government, advocating a military solution of the crisis to its finality, were only tamed on January 6, 1999, when the rebels counter-attacked with devastating consequences. From the safe haven of the Capital, Freetown, the claim had widely been that the country was peaceful and stable and its inhabitants had been lulled or lulled themselves into a false sense of security. But the reality of the chaos, lawlessness and collapsed security belied the contrary claims from the metropolis. As Government lost control of swathes of the hinterland and the capacity to guarantee security so it became averse to peaceful negotiations, strove for a military victory over the rebels and sought assistance from every available source to achieve this. It became almost impossible to raise any voice for peace above the screams of fighting to victory. The war escalated and the horrific atrocities shocked the world and pressure mounted from outside; a twin track approach (military and negotiation) gained prominence, although the military track was the much preferred option, at least by the government.

THE INTER-RELIGIOUS COUNCIL OF SIERRA LEONE (IRCSL) AND THE ROAD TO LOME

This was the prelude to the Lome stage of the process. In this, the Inter-Religious Council of Sierra Leone (IRCSL), was to play a crucially proactive role, building a bridge of mutual trust between, and willingness to talk peace by, both government and the RUF. The IRCSL had been directly involved in the process since Abidjan and were able to take the initiative in the chaos of 1997, actively helped and encouraged by its partners, the World Conference on Religion and Peace (WCRP) based in New York, USA. This latter had the capacity and resources to facilitate the Council's initiatives for dialogue. We see today a reflection or replication of this in the increasing correspondence or rather co-ordinated stance between the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the African Union (AU), UN and international community generally, against military coups. It is to be hoped that this trend or development will take firm root and be extended to tackle other areas critical for the sustenance of democratic governance such as free and fair elections that enhance the efficacy of Parliament. The strategy Council used in its pursuit of peace was to first sensitize its own diverse leadership, comprising Christians and Muslims, on the need for peace before turning to the Paramount Chiefs, MPs, Press, Women's Groups, and university students. These were all variously opinion formers at their own levels and the Council engaged them in extended consultations on the peace option. These efforts were being pursued when they were interrupted by the May 1997 coup. Council led civil society in attempts to try and convince the coup leaders to return power to the Kabbah government. They were resumed after the restoration of the latter in March 1998.

The Council walked a tight rope not only between the government and the RUF, each of which was not quite sure which side the Council was on, but also in convincing and trying to win the backing of a terrorized populace for a pacific resolution of the crisis.

When the Lome Peace Talks started Council sent a team under their own auspices with help from their partners. They played a crucial role throughout the talks, employing various stratagems: of shuttle diplomacy, breaking barriers and log jams and building confidence among the parties, often taking time to pray with and preach to the delegates. The commitment of Council to the peace process did not end with the signing of the Agreement. Because of certain reservations and careful to stress that they were not defending the Agreement but merely presenting and explaining it to the populace, they collaborated with the National Commission for Democracy and Human Rights (NCDHR) in setting up a fund for the disarmament process worth Le140 million (\$48,276.00). This served as a stimulus and invitation that sent a positive signal to the international community. Despite all their efforts, however, after peace was attained some Council members feel rather disappointed that the structures that were provided for in the Agreement, such as the Council of Elders and Religious Leaders were either not set up or were deliberately weakened to ineffectuality. They accuse the government of hypocrisy, that though parties to the Agreement, they refused to or lacked the ability to learn from the mistakes of the past that were the cause of the devastating war; of continuing to marginalize certain individuals and regions; of blatant nepotism and tribalism. They are frustrated at the level of corruption and as well that sufficient time was not allowed for reconciliation after the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) would have completed its work before operationalizing the Special Court of Sierra Leone (SCSL), when wounds are still fresh.

PARLIAMENT AND THE LOME NEGOTIATIONS AND AGREEMENT

The negotiating team which government dispatched to Lome included members of Parliament, a diplomat from Sierra Leone's Permanent Mission to the United Nations, the national security adviser, a top army officer, two women from civil society, the deputy foreign minister, and the then Attorney General and Minister of Justice, now Vice President, who headed the team. Prior to their proceeding to Lome government had sponsored a consultative conference under the aegis of the NCDHR which met from 11-14 April 1999 in which, among others, Parliamentarians, civil society and women's groups participated. This conference came up with a recommendation that Parliament is allowed to play a greater and more active role in the peace process and that it takes seriously its role and responsibility of ratification of any Agreement. To the extent that resolutions taken at this conference corresponded with the stance maintained by government in the negotiations, Parliament could be said to have had an input in the process. This does not however diminish the fact that until very late in the day Parliamentarians who had always supported the peace option had a hard time openly espousing their cause because they faced the danger of stigmatization as rebels or worse, of being in communication with the RUF leader, Foday Sankoh. Warmongers found it convenient to silence peaceniks through the ruse of accusing them to be collaborators, which was a very dangerous label to be tagged on anybody. It was revealed in one of the interviews that there was great timidity and no unanimity among MPs as to the approach to take and that this was capitalized on, if not in fact fomented by, the executive.

Nevertheless, moderation prevailed and on the occasion of the signing of the Agreement in Lome, the President included in his delegation the leaders of the opposition parties. Thereafter, the Lome Agreement, unlike that of Abidjan, was laid before Parliament where it was critically examined before ratification, without which it would have acquired no legitimacy, hence unimplementable. The role of Parliament was in this case undeniably very crucial. MPs had been actively involved in the negotiations in Lome and there were constant consultations with Freetown. There was thus closer collaboration between the Executive and legislature, most essentially furthered by the then Attorney general and Minister of Justice and close confidant of the President. But to allow Parliament a role as such in the negotiations and even in passing the necessary legislation is a different proposition from allowing it to participate in the implementation. Government was not willing to go this far and share its triumph, whilst Parliament was not able to take Government on. Parliament ratified the whole Agreement (The Lome Peace Agreement (Ratification) Act, 1999) and enacted the Revolutionary United Front of Sierra Leone (Participation in Political and Democratic Process) Act, 1999 and the Commission for the Management of Strategic Resources, National Reconstruction and Development Act, 1999. The only caveat is that government did not fulfill all of its obligations under the Agreement, thus earning itself the accusation of bad faith and as is reminiscent of its handling of the Abidjan Accord, Parliament was unable or unwilling to do anything about this.

CIVIL SOCIETY

Jean-Francois Bayart has defined civil society as **“a society in relation with the state ... in so far as it is in confrontation with the state, or more precisely, as the process by which society seeks to breach and counteract the simultaneous totalisation unleashed by the state.”** (“Civil Society in Africa,” in Patrick Chabal (ed), Political Domination in Africa, Oxford University Press, p111. 1986). It is the body that creates space in the public arena for people to participate in satisfying their wants and asserting their autonomy. It plays a crucial role in regulating and mediating a balance between the interests of individuals and the social needs of the state. If it is well organized and managed it is promotive of progress and development and grassroots democracy, a complement to government’s efforts and can make governance easier, more efficient and less costly. It can serve as a check against the excesses of government, an alternative to political parties and a field in which leadership can be recruited or those excluded from political parties can find a convenient home.

In the Sierra Leone situation, putative democratic institutions were to a large extent part of the governance problematic in that they were not working as well as they should, principally because they lacked the capacity to do so. One of the pointed criticisms against the late President Stevens has been that whilst he did not kill people as such he nevertheless stifled the working of institutions. It was in order to correct this legacy that civil society in general stepped into the breach in 1995/96 to play a foremost role, almost making the agenda, and Campaign for Good Governance (CGG) was started. It has since its inception organized workshops with the participation of Parliament, the executive and the judiciary and bringing in the international community.

The international community has stepped in with help when it saw civil society playing a critical role. Particularly so when the latter has defined certain areas of concern and shouted loudly and clearly, e.g. over corruption, this has stung the international community into action. CGG has indubitably established itself in the country, creating a critical mass that is demanding answers to awkward questions and advocating accountability. In its optic, the social contract has broken down and must be renegotiated. Even so, it has already started far ahead of the 2007 elections a voter and civic education sensitization exercise. We must however be mindful that civil society, and not only in Sierra Leone, is becoming professionalized as a result of the control of resources through mainly international interventions. They are becoming increasingly isolated from their constituencies from which they derive their legitimacy and dynamism. Their members are less critical of the activities, especially the shenanigans of the government. Even while it was in the forefront drawing the train of peace and inveighing against violence and the violation of human rights, civil society was perceived by some as working in cahoots with government; were accused of being weak, cowed, confused and unrepresentative of the populace, manipulated or teleguided from State House. It was difficult to distinguish between the stances it adopted and that of government, hence to acknowledge its independence. Throughout the negotiations in Lome it was represented by the two women earlier referred to, one of whom is unfortunately deceased and the other is now a senior minister in the government.

As stated previously, when the NPRC military junta was dragging its feet and did not want to hand over power in 1996 the civil society mounted pressure in the two resounding National Consultative Conferences at the Bintumani Hotel Complex in Freetown where it asserted its moral weight. In January 1999 when public confidence in the ability of the pro-government forces to protect the citizenry had substantially eroded, and correspondingly public demand for a negotiated settlement increased it organized civil disobedience as the President was reluctant about the negotiation. Services were withheld by public servants, teachers and students refused to return to school, and the judicial system remained non-functional. In January 1999 the Human Rights Committee was formed, consisting of a coalition of local and international human rights and humanitarian organizations, including the NCDHR, National Forum for Human Rights, Medecins sans Frontieres, OXFAM, and Christian Aid. They demanded a peaceful resolution of the conflict. ARTICLE 19 joined in by calling on the international community to support the demand for the active involvement of civil society in the search for peace in Sierra Leone.

ROLE OF WOMEN

Women have been playing a significant role in public life in Sierra Leone for a long time, and their overwhelming numerical strength notwithstanding, their contribution to moulding the contours of governance is disproportionately limited. Their upward mobility within the political and bureaucratic systems is measured. However the new trends in international movement of women, their affiliation to international organizations and participation in international fora have all added a sense of urgency for a more prominent role for them in national life.

Both in and out of Parliament gender issues are being debated the political parties have taken positions on the role of women in the party hierarchies. Apart from the important appointment of a woman as Chairman and Chief Electoral Commissioner of NEC, it is to be awaited to see what the party conventions that are still to hold before the 2007 elections will prove. Nonetheless, it is not enough that women should enter the political playing field; it is not the same as transferring privileges to women. Because of the sedimented distortions and convolutions of the political space it is necessary to fundamentally realign the system, especially the structure of injustice which will not easily respond to quick fixes. Women's issues have a greater chance of resolution in a political structure that seeks to level the playing field and ensure justice for all, rather than seeking to increase the mere numerical or physical representation of women on the table of power, such as the 50/50 Group has been trying to do. After all, the struggle for democracy is aimed at ridding society of the manipulation of the various differentiations in society, whether they are ethnic, religious or gender based.

IMPLEMENTING AND SUSTAINING THE LOME AGREEMENT

The Lome Peace Agreement between the Government of Sierra Leone (GOSL) and the RUF/SL having been signed in Lome on 18 May 1999, it was now left to deploy every effort to build and translate it to sustainable development and democratic governance. The preamble to the Agreement contains statements of ideals that are of relevance and are instructive:

- 1) That both parties signatory to it were “ **moved by the imperative need to meet the desire of the people of Sierra Leone for a definitive settlement of the fratricidal war in the country and for genuine national unity and reconciliation.**”
- 2) Commitment to “**promoting full respect for human rights and humanitarian law ... and popular participation in the governance of the country and the advancement of democracy in a socio-political framework free of inequality, nepotism and corruption.**”
- 3) Concern “**with the socio-economic well being of all the people of Sierra Leone.**”
- 4) Determination “**to foster mutual trust and confidence ... and to establish sustainable peace and security: to pledge forthwith to settle all past, present and future differences and grievances by peaceful means, and to refrain from the threat and use of armed force to bring about any change in Sierra Leone.**”
- 5) Conviction that “**sovereignty belongs to the people, and the Government derives all its powers, authority and legitimacy from the people.**”
- 6) Recognition that “**the children of Sierra Leone, especially those affected by armed conflict, in view of their vulnerability, are entitled to special care and the protection of their inherent right to life, survival and development, in accordance with the provisions of the International Convention on the Rights of the Child.**”

- 7) **With a more sub-regional focus, emphasis on “the importance of democracy as a factor of regional peace and security, and as essential to the socio-economic development of ECOWAS Member States ... their commitment to the consolidation of democracy and respect of human rights while reaffirming the need for all Member States to consolidate their democratic base, observe the principles of good governance and good economic management in order to ensure the emergence and development of a democratic culture which takes into account the interests of the peoples of West Africa.”**

It was widely expected that the Agreement would be implemented in good faith to the letter, carrying the whole nation along in the process. But the support for it must first be secured from the elected representatives and this was done when it was taken to and was duly ratified by Parliament, unlike in the case of the Abidjan Peace Accord. It ratified the whole Agreement (The Lome Peace Agreement (Ratification) Act, 1999) and enacted the Revolutionary United Front of Sierra Leone (Participation in Political and Democratic Process) Act, 1999 and the Commission for the Management of Strategic Resources, National Reconstruction and Development Act, 1999.

The road to Lome had been long, sometimes bumpy and posed huge challenges, especially as problems associated with the Abidjan Accord caused serious reflection on how to avoid its mistakes and difficulties. Securing the Agreement is however one thing, important as it obviously is, but implementing and sustaining it is quite another and entails many processes. One of these processes arose out of the desire to find a transitional mechanism to incorporate the RUF/SL into governance which at the same time satisfied the GOSL's insistence on doing so within the ambit of the Constitution. Government was adamant about publicly admitting sharing power with rebels, so had to contrive the deceptive formulation that was actually nothing other than what it wanted to deny. Until the holding of elections which were pending in 2001 a formula had to be devised to structure government in a way that allowed the RUF/SL to be transformed into a political party, its members to hold public office and to be appointed to Cabinet without giving offence to the interests of the other political parties and civil society organizations. It was not difficult for the RUF/SL to be discredited after the sad incident of May 2000 in which there were deaths at Foday Sankoh's residence. After the nature of the conflict and the opportunity to redeem itself was seen to have been squandered, the implication was now that the RUF/SL no longer deserved any concessions and should just be dumped and forgotten. However, the fact that there are still many young people who see their future as bound up with this party implies that it cannot just be discarded like that. Time will tell whether reconciliation is a sufficient imperative to allow the RUF/SL scope in the polity or is no longer compelling.

After the peace had been negotiated and signed in Lome in 1999, just as it happened in Abidjan in 1996, GOSL should have held Parliamentary elections by April 2001 when the five-year term of Parliament was due to end.

Constitutionally, if the elections were not held then Parliament should have dissolved itself unless there was a State of Emergency, in which case the life of Parliament could be extended for six months at a time (Section 85 of the 1991 Constitution of Sierra Leone). At the same time, the president would also have ceased to be president unless he was re-elected for his second and final term, provided there were no Parliamentary elections pending or there was no State of Emergency (Section 49 of the Constitution). Parliamentary elections were however pending and a State of Emergency was in force. GOSL was caught squarely in the horns of a dilemma which it was in no hurry however to resolve. With the NEC declaring that the security situation was not conducive to holding elections, the State of Emergency was extended further. Before that several members of the opposition were appointed to cabinet positions, and the NCDHR together with the Commission for the Consolidation of Peace (CCP) had convened a National Consultative Conference to seek to clarify and get consensus over such issues as the choice between the proportional representation and constituency-based systems, sensitization of the electorate, and the relationship between the TRC, SCSL and the national judicial system. Although GOSL had initially announced that it will not be bound by the Conference's decisions, at the end it did just that, thereby leading to the conclusion that it had been flying a kite and confirming suspicions and accusations that it had stage managed the whole thing. Part of the pressure for the elections came from the fact that in accordance with the stipulations of the Lome Agreement space needed to be created for the party of the RUF (RUF) **“to enter the mainstream of the democratic process.”**

POST-CONFLICT ELECTIONS

Dr. Terence Lyons, of the Institute for Conflict Analysis and Resolution, George Mason University in the United States, offers some invaluable insights that are relevant to post-conflict Sierra Leone, in Working Paper No. 20 written in February 2002, titled “Postconflict Elections: War Termination, Democratization, and Demilitarizing Politics.” Although he focuses essentially on elections as instruments of conflict resolution and democratization, he nonetheless treats of the processes and policies supportive of the dual goals of war termination and democratization. He draws from other scholarly theories and concepts and from his discussion we can distil the following:

- From conflict resolution concepts he stresses that there are inherent strategic and security dilemmas that military leaders face, i.e. to stop fighting and exchange their armed power for an imponderable chance at political power.
- From political transitions studies we see that considerations of the legacies of the old order as against the uncertainties inherent in competitive elections determine strategic choices.
- From both concepts and studies above, it is evident that institutions such as interim governments, political parties and electoral commissions are critical from the point of view of security and political agendas. Like an aircraft taking off and trying to get airborne, the period following conflicts and the signing of agreements is not free from difficulties.
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- Coming from circumstances of societal disorder, general insecurity, fear, distrust and institutional breakdown societies in this category must normally hold elections when these circumstances have not yet disappeared in order, in the final analysis, to legitimate, both internally and externally, the new leadership and institutions, preserve the peace, and promote peace building over time.

A series of long-term and difficult transitions or processes are involved here, e.g. legitimizing political institutions, demobilizing soldiers and resettling internally displaced persons (IDPs), refugees and returnees, dealing with human rights abuses and institutionalizing the rule of law, and moving the economy from relief to development. The start of the implementation process is important for it is then that the critical precedents, norms, and institutional frameworks that structure the post conflict political order are established. This period is fraught with both **“particular opportunities and risks as local leaders assess the relative benefits of working to sustain peace and build democracy in societies still polarized and distorted by war and where demagogues can capitalize on people’s fears.”** He then notes most significantly that **“as a result, the influence of institutional arrangement and design, incentives and sanctions, and norms and patterns of behaviour during these transitions play a particularly important role in encouraging peace building and reducing the chances of backsliding into renewed conflict or authoritarian rule.”** (ibid, pp. 6-7).

Whilst elections on their own do not constitute democracy, nor institutions in themselves make societies democratic, elections need to be institutionalized or routinized and to take root in the fertile soil of a democratic culture. As we have already noted, manipulating, stealing or having flawed elections has been greatly blamed for the political crisis that brewed, bubbled beneath the surface, or gestated until it erupted in 1991 with the devastating consequences we now know only too well and must live with. Over the years we have crafted Parliaments with varying claims of representative credentials. One MP who has been in Parliament since 1982 has indicated that the workload was not heavy in the days of the single party, that Parliamentary work was not full time, interesting or dynamic, and that the committee system was not effective then. There was camaraderie between ministers and MPs and politics was not as adversarial. Now, however, Parliament is in a stronger position, more dynamic and the opposition’s contribution in debating and exposing issues is more vocal and robust, even as it is drowning in the sea of the government’s overwhelming majority and therefore cannot win votes. The instrument the opposition uses most to the point of abuse is Standing Order 23 (SO23) which gives scope to them to talk on any issue outside the routine proceedings. The new Speaker is rumoured to be trying to kill this outlet. One of Parliament’s severest weaknesses inheres in its total dependence on governmental support, i.e. on what the Executive is willing to provide. Even before this present majority, government had in the previous Parliament started using the weapon of starving the assembly of funds and killing whatever measure or issue it did not approve of. Using the excuse of World Bank pressure government indulged, and is still indulging, the habit of introducing bills into Parliament through the dubious ruse of Certificates of Emergency when no sufficient time is allowed to study or examine or closely scrutinize bills. Almost every measure is rushed through this way because there is no proper timetabling.

Moreover, unlike other Parliaments, no days are earmarked as opposition days in which the opposition can bring up matters of specific concern. As for Private Members Bills these simply do not exist, particularly as there is no Parliamentary counsel.

Above all, the Parliament that has resulted from the 2002 elections gave the ruling SLPP such a whopping majority over the combined opposition that the prospects for true democratic growth in our post conflict transition are indeed doubtful. Parliament was already beset with problems and weaknesses even before that and these are now multiplied and worsened. Before these elections, the opposition formed the ALL Political Parties Association (APPA) and among its demands were return to the old system of constituency-based elections, the dissolution of NEC and its reconstitution in order to guarantee fair play and transparency. Then will the result be credible elections. The NEC Chairman and Chief Electoral Commissioner, the late Walter Nicol, rejected the latter demand on the grounds that as there had not been any proper census taken since 1985, taking it at the material time and carrying out the necessary voter registration would take about three years; not many wanted to hear about this prolongation, certainly not the opposition. The remaining administrative problems, such as had to do with the distribution of ID cards by which voters were to be identified and so entitled them to vote, were resolved through compromise effected principally in consequence of the intervention and mediation of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL) and the international community. It was agreed that UNAMSIL would provide the logistics and supervise the distribution and later collection of the ballots, ballot boxes and elections officials scattered over the hinterland, while bodies like the National Democratic Institute (NDI) helped immensely with sensitization, registration, especially of women, and training of party agents. NEC also conducted seminars at its headquarters in Freetown on the district block system of voting, more particularly the counting of votes and declaration of winners.

Thus it was that Presidential and Parliamentary elections were held in May 2002. The opposition parties jointly and severally protested the flawed results but fear of rocking the boat amid the not yet quite settled storm and the counsel of the international community led to their acceptance. Parliament has been doing its work since then and gives an opportunity to review its strengths and shortcomings. Coincidentally, the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA) organized a workshop to **“Strengthen Legislatures in Commonwealth West Africa,”** from 22-25 February 2005, at the Kimbima Hotel, Freetown. Apart from what has already been discussed about the nature of elections from which Parliaments arise and the role of Parliament, from the variety of papers presented the following weaknesses were highlighted:

- Deference to the Chief Executive.
- Perception of the status of MPs as inferior to that of Ministers, especially so as MPs’ salaries and emoluments are far below those of Deputy Ministers.
- Poor conditions of service of MPs, against high, sometimes unrealistic expectations of constituents. Poor remuneration causes MPs to moonlight, as it were, even scout around for contracts which government awards, thus creating a conflict of interests.

- Lack of adequate incentives like transport and sitting allowances and refreshments during committee meetings.
- Most development programmes are driven by the Executive. In this connection, lack of political will to strengthen Parliament is associated with the view that doing so will be helping the opposition.
- Shortage of committee rooms (before the ongoing Chinese rehabilitation of Parliament commenced there were only 2) and members having to serve on many committees.
- Only 4 clerks are at hand to serve the 31 committees. There is no research staff or services or adequate and accurate information, nor professional assistance to help with committee work. It is suspected that this is some form of executive control, strongly limiting Parliament's capacity to investigate policy proposals and hold government accountable.
- Parliamentary records and library information are scattered, disorganized and outdated. Access to publications is impossible because of costs.
- No adequate resources for Parliamentary work and Parliament is not self-accounting.
- Committees do not elect their chairpersons. They are appointed through the joint consultation between the Speaker, the Majority Leader and the Clerk of Parliament, although professional experience and expertise are considered.
- There are few field trips and these are funded by government or other agencies, like the National Commission for Social Action (NACSA), but this compromises or interferes with the proper, objective, and honest scrutiny of the executive or agency, lest future assistance is stopped.
- Legislators are mostly inadequately prepared before they enter Parliament and so are often unaware of their authority, how to organize their time and conduct their business, or how to deal effectively with the citizens and the press.
- Poor or lack of media coverage of Parliamentary and committee work.

Despite these weaknesses, the workshop emphasized the crucial functions of Parliamentary oversight and budgetary control. Democratic norms dictate that elected Parliaments hold **'the power of the purse'** and thus must authorize all expenditures, borrowings and revenue collections. Parliament has the constitutional responsibility under **the Constitution of Sierra Leone Act No.6 of 1991, Section 93(1)** to supervise the government's administration of finances in terms of their collection, allocation and budget execution. Therefore budget proposals for revenues and expenditures along with underlying policies should be submitted annually to Parliament for scrutiny and enactment. Parliament monitors the budgetary process through the Auditor General (AG), who audits the public financial transactions and reports to Parliament. The Public Accounts Committee (PAC) then studies these reports carefully and makes recommendations to the full House for remedial action on irregularities uncovered by the audits. The Minister of Finance presents the budget annually to Parliament and this becomes the Appropriation Bill until it is passed. Until then, this Bill is referred to the Finance and Supplementary Financial Provisions Standing Committee which divides into four Appropriation Sub-Committees to properly scrutinize and ascertain the prudent management of public funds.

One such sub-committee reporting on the Budget estimates for 2005 observes that the allocation of Le1,396,000,000.00 (\$481,379.00) to Parliament is inadequate, considering it has to cope with reforms in line with Commonwealth and Parliamentary practices worldwide and to be able to grapple with its numerous constraints. It therefore recommends a supplementary budget allocation to enhance the exposure of MPs and senior staff to participation in global fora. Because it disapproves of Parliament being treated like a department under the Ministry of Political and Parliamentary Affairs, and in order to assert its autonomy it recommends the establishment of a specialist Parliamentary Service Commission to strengthen the capacity of Parliament. It also recommends the sub-division of the budget allocation for Parliament into three sub-heads or new programmes, each to be controlled independently by a head of division but under the control and authority of the Clerk of Parliament thus:

- Office of the Speaker
- Office of the Clerk of Parliament
- Legislative

Budgetary allocations to Parliament since 1996 have been:

1996	Le. 652,417,771.00	(\$224,972.00)
1998	767,487,155.00	(264,651.00)
2002	728,040,000.00	(251,048.00)
2003	1,014,400,000.00	(349,793.00)
2004	1,200,000,000.00	(413,793.00)
2005	1,396,000,000.00	(481,379.00)

Members of the PAC are however faced with time constraints and lack of adequate facilities and logistics to do full justice to their tasks.

Recommendations were also made as to how to remedy the situation:

- Training MPs to acquire knowledge on budgets and budgetary processes.
- Strengthen the relationship between Parliament and the AG.
- The chairperson of the PAC should come from the main opposition party in Parliament, particularly as with the government's huge majority members of the majority party hardly raise issues of accountability in committee meetings.
- The budgetary system to be so crafted as to reflect and highlight the effects of government spending on gender and children who constitute the majority of the population.
- Training of civil society organizations on budgetary procedures and related issues in order to understand and engage in the budgetary process.
- While the AG and Parliament have an *ex post* function, this often comes too late and is exacerbated by the fact that the AG's reports are submitted late.
- Parliament should devise mechanisms through which it will finance itself; in the meantime, government should resource it adequately.
- Improve MPs conditions of service.
- Establish a research team in Parliament.
- International NGOs and Local NGOs should be allowed to bring to the work of Parliamentary committees technical and professional expertise to aid efficiency and effectiveness.

- Bridge the information gap, improve on technical staff competences and material resources deficits.
- Open committees more to the public, civil society and the media to enhance understanding and reporting.
- Increase support to the work of political parties in Parliament, such as is given to party caucuses and committees in other Parliaments.
- Develop more Parliamentary networks and coalitions around global issues as well as facilitate exchange of information and expertise.
- Encourage MPs to initiate legislation through Private Members Bills.

(“Parliamentary Oversight: The Sierra Leone Experience and Constraints,” Hon. Bernadette Lahai; “Parliamentary Oversight Mechanisms and Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP) Monitoring,” Hon. Ibrahim Sesay, J.P.; “Financial Scrutiny of the Executive: Parliament and the Public Accounts Committee,” Daniel T.M. Gbondo, NDI; “The GOSL Annual Budget-Formulation, Implementation, Monitoring and Control,” Pannell Kerr Forster – Sierra Leone; “Key Points For Action,” DFID; “Parliamentary Oversight: What, Why and How?” Denis Marshall, Secretary-General, Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA).

It is observable, especially since the municipal elections, that Parliamentarians are trying to establish close working relations with the local councilors across the country. There are widespread reports of MPs working with councilors to sponsor, supervise and monitor development projects. This is a good sign and should be encouraged. Most significantly, is the superlative role of especially Talking Drum Studio (TDS) and Independent Radio Network (IRN) to sensitize the public on goings-on in Parliament as well as to elicit public opinion and response to these goings-on. Both TDS and IRN are using drama, comedy and local lingua franca to put across intended messages. The impact this effort is already having is quite immense and welcome.

TRANSITION FROM SINGLE TO MULTI PARTY

It had not been easy for Sierra Leone to make the transition from the single party to multi-party. In 1992 the NPRC coup aborted the first planned attempt at such transition. It was tried again in 1996 only to be interrupted once more, albeit briefly, by the AFRC coup of 1997. In effect, we are still confronted with not only the challenge of sanitizing politics of its militarist aspects but also to complete the unfinished task of disabusing minds of a single party mentality and inculcating the spirit and culture of competitive, multi-party system of politics. This may well explain the reservations for or tepidity with which Parliamentary reform is approached. But this is a Catch 22 situation: for if the needed reform is not effected, how will the single party mentality be done away with and the culture of competitive multi-party politics fostered? Every effort must therefore be deployed to staunch the creeping tendency toward one-partyism in Sierra Leone. Otherwise the prospects for sustainable democratic governance will be grim indeed.

TRANSITIONAL JUSTICE: THE SPECIAL COURT OF SIERRA LEONE (SCSL)

Add to this the challenge of transitional justice which is epitomized by the Special Court of Sierra Leone (SCSL) and the complexity is compounded.

The establishment of the SCSL at the request of the President is important in view of the search for credibly submitting those who have committed heinous crimes against the people of Sierra Leone to justice. Moreover, it is an index of the option Sierra Leoneans have taken between retributive justice, on the one hand, and conciliation, on the other. The President had tried to restrict the court's jurisdiction only to **“members of the RUF and their accomplices,”** but the international human rights organizations and the Sierra Leone Bar Association would have none of this. They raised objections, especially the latter, insisting that prosecution must not be restricted to any one faction or group. Although now largely muted, there was earlier much debate over the timing of the Court's establishment. Some were of the view that the peace process needed to have been given more time for wounds to heal before starting to sit. Now very much a fact of everyday life, the activity of the Court has made **“itself something of a *de facto* civil society institution within Sierra Leone ... its real impact on Sierra Leone, especially the civil society sector, will probably be well beyond the tribunal's statutory mandate, through its capacity-building contribution to the country as well as its revitalization of the war-torn populace's sense of the rule of law It is expected that it will have “spillover” effects to the benefit of the domestic court system, not the least of which will be the eventual handover of its multi-million dollar complex of buildings – more resources, both human and material need to be dedicated to local justice institutions. Not only will the local judiciary be called upon to provide accountability beyond the limited Court's prosecutions; it will be the foundation on which Sierra Leonean society's commitment to a legal order will rest.”** (J. Peter Pham, “Lazarus Rising: Civil Society and Sierra Leone's Return from the Grave,” *International Journal of Not-for-Profit Law*, Vol.7, Issue 1, November 2004, pp.18-21).

UKDFID ASSISTANCE

The United Kingdom (UK) invests Pound Sterling 40 million annually on direct programme support, in addition to the costs of retaining the International Military Advisory and Training Team (IMATT) in Sierra Leone. IMATT is helping train the Sierra Leone military to handle the areas bordering the country and any threats of incursion, as well as to reduce the size and weed out unqualified soldiers and officers. It is assisting in the recruitment and training of new police officers and training of current officers to ensure that the police force can handle internal security. In 1998, on the restoration of the Kabbah administration, the U.K.Department for International Development (DFID) began a Parliamentary Development Support Project (PDSP) that proposed six main areas of assistance:

- Seminars for MPs, Ministers, Parliamentary staff, and civil servants, on the role and workings of Parliament.
- Support to women Parliamentarians and seminars for prospective women politicians.
- Consultancy advice from Westminster (and other Commonwealth) Parliaments.
- Training for Parliamentary staff on aspects of Parliamentary practice and procedure, at Westminster and in similar Commonwealth Parliaments in Africa.
- Provision of new equipment for the offices of Parliament, particularly IT equipment, and related IT training in Freetown.
- Books, periodicals and equipment for the Library of Parliament.

The Sierra Leonean Director of the Project was to be the Clerk of Parliament and it was to be managed by a British management agency, as well as that the Minister of Political and Parliamentary Affairs who is the liaison between the Government and Parliament was to be involved. The Project was to cost Pound Sterling 500,000.00 over a two-year period beginning in November 1998. But implementation of this Project was interrupted by the January 1999 rebel invasion of Freetown, and further prevented by the urgent priorities associated with immediate reconstruction in 1999/2000.

In April 2004, the Parliamentary Committee Strengthening Project (PCSP) was developed to replace the PDSP and build the capacity of up to 12 key Committees and also Clerks of Parliament through:

- Strengthening them to be a check on executive power and a source of representation.
- Revision of Standing Orders and best practice in Parliamentary procedures and records management to allow committee work its proper impact.
- Budget, staffing and skills to maintain separation from the executive.
- Provision of essential resources for functioning of Parliamentary committees.
- Setting up of a regular pattern of committee members' visits to their districts.

Pound Sterling 1.1 million was allocated to the Project for a 30-month period beginning in 2004. An Advisory Committee was set up to be chaired by the Speaker, with the Clerk of Parliament as Deputy or Alternate Chairman, and members from the two main political parties represented in Parliament, DFID Freetown, Ministry of Political and Parliamentary Affairs and civil society interacting with Parliament. Implementation was to be by NDI. This Project which started in August 2004 has however been abruptly halted because of disagreement between DFID and the administration of Parliament, essentially the Clerk backed by the Speaker. The conflict basically revolves around the determination of the modus operandi of the Project. For instance, whilst the Speaker and Clerk acknowledge the need for assistance and forging of partnership, they are firm that this should not be 'demeaning' or 'derogatory'. They are, e.g., unhappy that CGG was chosen to organize seminars and workshops instead of CCSL with whom they are comfortable. DFID sees this as 'interventionist' and 'obstructionist' and point out that the Clerk has a track record of problems and confrontation with almost every assistance provider. The Clerk is also accused of objecting to in-country training for purely selfish reasons. In defence, the Clerk contrasts the objectionable attitude of DFID with the easier and pleasanter relations he enjoys with the African Development Bank (ADB), which is helping with the development of a Resource Centre for MPs by working through the Ministry of Finance. ADB has gone even as far as to appoint as Desk Officer for the project a former Financial Secretary in the Finance Ministry, Henry Lasite. This endearing feat is contrasted with the effrontery of DFID's appointment of a Zimbabwean to head its Project. The Zimbabwean did not help his cause when his first memo contained harsh and indelicate language against government, past and present.

The U.K. is also lending assistance in the fight against corruption, even as Government is criticized for lack of political will and commitment, and the Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) of lacking the teeth to actually bite, as well as for the reconstruction of security institutions and the justice system.

In all these sectors of assistance, the thrust is to enhance Parliament's responsibility in protecting the UK taxpayers' money and to ensure that the people of Sierra Leone obtain good value for the money invested. The agreement signed between the governments of the UK and Sierra Leone in February 2003, on the long-term development partnership to support the poverty reduction strategy that contains benchmarks and indicators of progress to be taken into account in regular reviews and annual revisions states: **“shifts the focus from crisis and emergency management to sustainable economic growth and poverty reduction in the immediate post-conflict period, with an emphasis on reforming the institutions responsible for the delivery nationally of government services, particularly in education and basic health. Rooting out the corruption that has crippled these institutions for very many years, and the failure to provide services across the country will be central to the delivery of improved access to higher standards of healthcare and education.”**

THE NATIONAL DEMOCRATIC INSTITUTE (NDI)

The NDI, through its outreach programme, has been supporting MPs to hold town hall meetings in their districts and developed training modules addressing such topics as communication techniques and mobilization of Parliamentary resources for sustainable constituency outreach. In February 2004, it opened a Resource Centre in Freetown with a reading room, library, word processing and printing facilities for MPs and their Parliamentary staff, as well as providing training in computer skills. NDI has however also found itself ensnared in a similar conflict as DFID and this has affected the delivery of invaluable services to the extent that it is feared the programme will grind to a halt and close down. Already NDI has shrunk its office space and personnel. The problem, from the NDI perspective, is unambiguously the Clerk who it claims has succeeded in making his staff, MPs and even the Speaker believe that without him there will not be a Parliament. The Clerk is said to keep everything close to his chest and any programme that is not of benefit to him is not good for Parliament. It is even pointed out that the Clerk was not as manipulative and assertive as he now is when the late powerful political patriarch and longest serving MP and up to his death Leader of the House, Hon. S.B. Marah, was alive and in firm control of affairs. Parliament is from this viewpoint seen not as an institution or to be working as such, but to revolve around the strong and maverick personality of the Clerk. This view is shared even by some MPs who are however resentful of this, more so as they seem helpless to do anything about it. MPs are greatly weakened in that the Speaker and Clerk are possessed of important weapons with which to clobber MPs: the decision as to who travels or not to attend conferences, and who is allowed to speak in Parliament or not. In addition, Government is claimed to be pursuing a policy, if sometimes subtle, of weakening Parliament. In this respect, the Clerk and his presumed overbearing attitude seem to serve Government's plan and purpose quite well. Of course, this is vehemently rejected by the Clerk and Speaker, who see their roles as defending Parliament from any onslaught. His supporters and admirers see in the Clerk a personality who is jealously guarding the integrity of Parliament and not willing to advertise whatever weaknesses or deficiencies that may afflict it. Before the 2002 elections, training was conducted for women aspiring to stand in those elections in partnership with the 50/50 Group.

At the end of this training they produced and distributed the “**Sierra Leone Women’s Manifesto,**” which underscored the importance of meeting the needs of women in all sectors of development and established a strong foundation upon which to set priorities for a future legislative agenda. In April 2004, with funding from the UNDP it assisted the National Election Watch (NEW) coalition in deploying 1,500 of its members to monitor the local council polls on election day and at the end NEW released two statements on the elections.

COLLABORATIVE ENGAGEMENT COORDINATED BY UNDP

With the shift of emphasis to enhancing development to prevent the recurrence of war by addressing its causes, the UNDP, working with GOSL, UNAMSIL Civil Affairs and Human Rights, DFID, the World Bank, the European Union, USAID, and other bilateral donors concluded a governance project strategy covering the reactivation of local government administration, initiation of results-based monitoring of service delivery, restructuring the police force, restructuring and retraining the army, media reform, judicial and legal reforms, civil service reforms to improve the operations of state enterprises, and decentralization. This close collaborative engagement, essentially ensuring an integrated approach through policy dialogue and material assistance has governance and democratic development as a major area of support and a central feature of overall capacity building and conflict avoidance strategy. The focus is on aiding Government and civil society partners in making governance institutions more effective and accountable as well as more responsive to local needs and priorities. The multidimensional collaborative effort is geared to assisting the people and Government of Sierra Leone address the consequences and causes of the decade long brutal conflict, even as the effort acknowledges national ownership and commitment to the process of renewal and overcoming the legacy of the “lost” years. Whilst the overall strategy is to facilitate participation of all the stakeholders and beneficiaries with particular focus on women and adolescents, joint policy reviews and formulations, monitoring and evaluation and programming are undertaken to provide a common and consistent approach to monitor progress against the set priorities, goals and targets. There is a further commitment to provide the assistance in a standard transparent, equitable and accountable manner that ensures the integrity of the activities undertaken and services rendered.

CONCLUSION

It cannot be gainsaid that Sierra Leone has indeed come a long way even as the journey has been strewn with alternations between heightened and disappointed hopes, amputated dreams and persons, sobriety and elevated levels of corruption, and a richly endowed potentiality and donor-driven economy. The country has been, is being, treated to a plethora of workshops and seminars covering a gamut of every conceivable area of discourse. However, the time for conferencing and advocacy is out and there must now be a gear shift and move to the fast lane of implementation and effective monitoring. Sierra Leone finds herself in the strange position in which there is no more war but the peace is eerie and dicey. To a keen observer, there is no justification or basis for complacency or triumphalism or patting ourselves on our backs and concluding that we have arrived at the destination of peace.

The presence of UNAMSIL, representative and symbolic of and guarantor of peace, provides a cover over latent frustrations, dissatisfactions and disaffections that must be taken seriously and addressed. Otherwise the still fragile peace will founder and the victory easily turn to another nightmare. In this regard, a few, more generalized recommendations regarding the creation of an enabling environment in which institutions like Parliament will work more efficiently and greater sensitivity to the public good are in place:

- Canvass a national dialogue to build consensus on core issues most critical to Sierra Leoneans and promote collaborative effort in defining our problems, seeking appropriate solutions to them and build confidence.
- Develop synergies, programmes and platforms to stamp the imprimatur of credibility on the system, especially to facilitate equal access to all political parties to all parts of the country.
- Make greater efforts to integrate the formal state institutions with the informal, fast receding sectors and make them accountable, responsive and responsible to the citizenry.
- Create a new, credible, morally anchored and workable framework for political competition.
- Strengthen the nascent decentralization process which, if permitted especially by central government, could easily provide an avenue or opportunity for minority parties or those that lose elections to bide their time and strengthen their gains in preparation for another try in future.
- Permit the infusion of **“fresh blood”** into the nation’s leadership, not simply in terms of age, but also of gender.
- In view of the huge majority Government enjoys in Parliament and that simply drowns out the opposition, it is necessary to devise mechanisms that make room for the floating voters and stragglers to be accommodated within the political process, especially in the party strongholds. This can be done at the same time as mechanisms that produce Parliament are carefully examined to render them more reflective of the popular will. After all, it is not just the fairness of polls that matters. The surrounding conditions under which elections are held are just as crucial.

Michael Chege is spot on when he asserts that **“Africa is a region with many potential candidates for state failure... Preventing governments from pursuing self-destructive policies requires first and foremost generating an internal capacity to monitor and contain the damage – which is primarily an African responsibility. Free and fair elections are an ingredient, but a continuing system of accountability, and restitution where necessary, will keep public institutions in good repair.... External donors who indulge those leaders (who have proved intolerant of those conditions) may be pushing those states toward a catastrophe that could ultimately hurt the donor nations themselves.”** (“Sierra Leone: The State that Came Back from the Dead,” The Washington Quarterly, Summer 2002, p.159).

Former President Václav Havel once stated: **“I think in the Czech Republic we have created all the basic institutions of democracy – political parties, a Parliament,**

elections. Now much more effort should be focused on building a civil society, to promote a climate that would encourage people to act as citizens in the best sense of the word.” To this we can add what Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn said that “the structure of the state is secondary to the spirit of human relations. Given human integrity, any honest system is acceptable, but given human rancor and selfishness, even the most sweeping of democracies would become unbearable. If the people themselves lack fairness and honesty, this will come to the surface under any system.”

Dr. Gary I. Allen, President of the Christian Mission for the United Nations Community in New York, summarizes all this when he argues that the moral and spiritual dimension is the essential foundation for democratic society. I agree with this and accept his conclusion that **“it is relatively easy to establish democratic institutions. However, it is not the institutions themselves that make a society democratic. Rather, it is the attitudes of the people who make up the society.... The mind of man can create democratic institutions, but unless there is a change in the heart of man, it will not work... The natural state of man is not democracy. It is anarchy – every man for himself. The governed want to be free from all constraints. On the other hand, for man who moves into leadership, the natural state is dictatorship. The governors want to control everyone else. By nature, every man is an anarchist and a despot. And we are trying to build democracies starting with these raw materials.”** (“Creating a Democratic Mindset,” delivered at the United Nations, 24 March 1994, pp.1-2).

Let us indeed seek to strengthen Parliament, and any other public institution, that man has created over the ages to make life livable and the world around him habitable. That is good and challenging enough. What is however better, if more realistic and practical, is to acknowledge the primacy of man over institution. After all, institutions are supposed to serve man, not vice versa. Man, as MP, minister or president, is not only political, economic or social, as we tend often to limit him, but also moral and spiritual. With a consciousness of this underpinning, especially in conflict or post-conflict situations, the strengthening project will be achievable, workable and meaningful and worth our effort. Above all, for a country as heavily dependent as Sierra Leone is on donor funds the threat by the donors of the withdrawal of such funds if Government reneges on its commitment to democratic governance is undeniably extremely crucial. This leverage must be understood by all as available and quite ready to be forcefully applied.

LIST OF INTERVIEWEES:

1. Mr. George Banda-Thomas, Minister of Internal Affairs and former Minister of Political and Parliamentary Affairs.
2. Hon. Dr. Bernadette Lahai, SLPP MP for Kenema District.
3. Dr. Raymond Kamara, Former UNPP Party Leader and 2002 Presidential Candidate for the Grand Alliance Party.
4. Dr. Ahmed R. Dumbuya, Former Deputy NUP Leader.
5. Hon. Justice Edmond Cowan, Speaker of Parliament.
6. Mr. J.A. Carpenter, Clerk of Parliament.
7. Mr. Keith Bastin, Senior Governance Adviser, DFID.

8. Mr. Daniel Gbondo, Senior Programme Officer, NDI.
9. Ms. Sylvia Fletcher, Senior Governance Officer, UNDP.
10. Hon. Ibrahim Sorie, APC MP, Kambia District.
11. Mr. Alimamy P. Koroma, General Secretary, CCSL.
12. Mrs. Olayinka Creighton-Randall, Coordinator, CGG.
13. Mr. Joseph S. Conteh, Former UNPP MP and Secretary General.
14. Dr. Alusine Fofanah, SLPP MP, Kambia District and Chairman, Human Rights Committee.
15. Hon. Dauda S. Kamara, APC MP, Kambia District.
16. Dr. Abass C. Bundu, Former MP, Minister, and Executive Secretary, ECOWAS.
17. Mr. Victor Chukuma Johnson, APC MP and Chairman, Appropriation Sub-Committee.

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ANNEXES

1. Sessional Parliamentary Committees 2002
2. 2005 Cabinet
3. 1996 Cabinet
4. 1988 Cabinet and Parliament
5. 1985 Cabinet and Parliament
6. 1971 Cabinet and Parliament
7. 1968 Cabinet and Parliament
8. 1967 Cabinet and Parliament
9. 1966 Cabinet and Parliament
10. Map of Sierra Leone
11. Members of Parliament – Contact Details
12. Members of Parliament – By District
13. Women Members of Parliament
14. Presidential Candidates – 2002 Elections
15. 1996 Presidential and Parliamentary Elections Results.