

**Director Speech at the Certification Ceremony and Cocktail for Open
Government Partnership Steering Committee on 19th August 2016 at State
House**

Mr Chairman, the Hon Vice President, Ministers of Government, Members of Parliament, Members of the Diplomatic Corps, Distinguished guests Good evening.

The obvious absence of communication between those who wielded power before and the ordinary citizens created a lot of mistrust, suspicion and misgiving that plunged the nation to a civil war that did not only deplete the economy but destroyed life and property.

About eight years ago His Excellency the President created a unique space to share activities of his government in the socio economic development of the country with the Sierra Leonean people, thereby bringing government closer to the people through facilitated discussions and dynamic participatory team sessions.

As the Director of the Open Government Initiative please permit me to mention some of the activities of the OGI which promote inclusion, participation, transparency and accountability in Sierra Leone;

- Our bottom top diagnostic tool is a mechanism through which service providers and citizens identify weaknesses in the delivery system and recommend improvement,
- Empower civil society and media organisations to play a watchdog role to monitor public service delivery and local government.
- Enable MDAs and planning departments to streamline and set priorities in budget allocation and monitor implementation.

- A mechanism for monitoring and evaluating service delivery performance, and platforms leading to publication of quality performance assessment. Thus obtaining efficiency in the system which satisfies beneficiaries and give confidence to providers.

Mr Chairman, after achieving much success in the early stages, certain development now fostered new opportunities to increase and improve OGI relevance to both the Government and the people of Sierra Leone, following the endorsement of the country as a member of the global Open Government Partnership in 2013. Such developments are inclusive of but, not limited to the following;

- the effective development of National Action Plans and implementation for the promotion of transparency, accountability, innovation and citizens participation in governance;
- the establishment of a National Open Data Portal to support the growth of Sierra Leone as an example of a data driven country in Africa;
- The enactment of the Local Content Act and Signing of Integrity Pacts to further enhance and broaden the scope of partnership in archiving some of the commitments in the OGP National Action Plan.
- Single Treasury Account

Mr Chairman, with the unflinching support of the Steering Committee to enhance the OGP process, Sierra Leone has been able to master the OGP practices compared to other countries around the world providing the opportunity for others to build on our successes and learn from them.

The OGP consultation process is driven by the Steering Committee that is made up of government and Civil Society representatives. Furthermore, this platform has been the cornerstone of the OGP process, and the Government of Sierra Leone ensured a participatory method that is legitimised by feedback from citizens whose priorities are in fact the priorities of the President. The overriding function of the Steering Committee is to undertake an inclusive and participatory process that informs the development of the Action Plan. In the past two years the Steering Committee has embarked upon initiatives such as the reviewing of our good governance gains and telling the stories to Sierra Leoneans on our status of implementation, tapping into Diaspora resources and the international communities.

The OGP process in Sierra Leone has concluded its first action plan with over 70% successes in completion of the 11 commitments in the implementation processes, despite the challenges faced over a year ago. The Steering Committee continue to provide support in strengthening good governance mechanism that is producing a positive impact on poverty reduction through advocacy for greater accountability to citizens in Sierra Leone and in the Diaspora as desired by His Excellency the President.

In conclusion, we are now entering a new era in which the OGI/OGP is playing a vital role in incorporating governance and core principles of Civil Society collaboration to meet international best practices.

The Steering Committee has demonstrated exemplary, with strategies in our implementation process that we can now share at all levels using various performance indicators to compete in the global arena.

Mr Chairman, Distinguish guests, I hereby express my profound appreciation for the partnership between the OGI, the Steering Committee Members and the Development Partners especially the World Bank. The impact has been fruitful, beneficial, worthy and very well received by Sierra Leonean people as well as government. This has to continue to enable the OGI to disseminate the ideals and tenets of participatory Democracy in the President's Agenda for prosperity.

The OGP/OGI Secretariat has identified appropriate institutions from Government in addition to the current membership, which we believe will provide invaluable support and commitment to ensure the effective achievement of the objectives of the 2nd National Action Plan which will end in June 2018. We are also proposing the Cabinet Secretariat to provide technical backstopping and strategic support to ensure timely implementation of critical commitments and effective monitoring and coordination across implementing agencies.

On behalf of the Open Government Secretariat in the Office of the President and my personal behalf, I wish to formally express my unreserved thanks and appreciation to the entire civil society and media community for their outstanding contributions, and support provided to the OGI through the years.

I thank you for your continued support towards the successful implementation of the Open Government Partnership process in Sierra Leone.