

# **Lasting Peace in Sierra Leone: The Revolutionary United Front Sierra Leone (Ruf/SL) Perspective and Vision**

## **RUF/SL ANTHEM**

RUF is fighting to save Sierra Leone  
RUF is fighting to save our people  
RUF is fighting to save our country  
RUF is fighting to save Sierra Leone

Chorus:

Go and tell the President, Sierra Leone is my home  
Go and tell my parents, they may see me no more  
When fighting in the battlefield I'm fighting forever  
Every Sierra Leonean is fighting for his land  
Where are our diamonds, Mr. President?  
Where is our gold, SLPP?  
RUF is hungry to know where they are  
RUF is fighting to save Sierra Leone

Chorus:

Go and tell the President, Sierra Leone is my home  
Go and tell my parents, they may see me no more  
When fighting in the battlefield I'm fighting forever  
Every Sierra Leonean is fighting for his land  
Our people are suffering without means of survival  
All our minerals have gone to foreign lands  
RUF is hungry to know where they are  
RUF is fighting to save Sierra Leone

Chorus:

Go and tell the President, Sierra Leone is my home  
Go and tell my parents, they may see me no more  
When fighting in the battlefield I'm fighting forever  
Every Sierra Leonean is fighting for his land  
Sierra Leone is ready to utilise her own  
All our minerals will be accounted for  
The people will enjoy in their land  
RUF is the saviour we need right now

Chorus:

Go and tell the President, Sierra Leone is my home  
Go and tell my parents, they may see me no more  
When fighting in the battlefield I'm fighting forever  
Every Sierra Leonean is fighting for his land  
RUF is fighting to save Sierra Leone  
RUF is fighting to save our people  
RUF is fighting to save our country

#### LASTING PEACE IN SIERRA LEONE: THE REVOLUTIONARY UNITED FRONT SIERRA LEONE (RUF/SL) PERSPECTIVE AND VISION

The 23 March, 1991 has become a landmark date in the annals of Sierra Leone's political history. For on that momentous date the first shots rang out in the eastern Kailahun District of Bomaru, to shake the long distressed people of Sierra Leone from their somnolence, helplessness and resignation and, at the same time, to signal the commencement of the, as it were, second and more determinedly focused war of liberation that is still raging. It was on that date that the Revolutionary United Front (RUF/SL) set out on the long march to liberate the suffering masses of Sierra Leone from the yoke of decades of crushing misery, deprivation and suppression in the hands of an indigenous clique of unpatriotic exploiters and leeches.

The firing of those initial shots came in the wake of the transference of power from President Siaka Stevens to Major General Joseph Saidu Momoh. On assuming office, the latter had initiated an electoral process to ensure the continued hold on power of his All People's Congress (APC) party. It was at this juncture that the RUF/SL came out in the open and declared that no elections will be held under Momoh. It demanded the emplacement of modalities, clearly signposted and demarcated, towards genuine democratic social transformation within ninety days, failing which his regime would be removed by force of arms. This demand was scorned and thus provided the spark that set off the armed challenge.

The inspiration and impulse to found the RUF/SL came over time from a confluence of events and circumstances. Whilst the first shots were fired on that particular date, the scorn by the Momoh government of the demands made on it was merely the last straw that torched an already highly combustible situation. Sierra Leone society had in reality collapsed and the leadership adopted an indifference and insensitivity that made it only a matter of time before something would be done to staunch the haemorrhage. Collective energies of the populace that should have been devoted to moulding and fashioning their lives to fit a God-given environment and resource endowment, had instead to be consumed by toilsome efforts to eke out a marginal and paltry living.

The minimal achievements at independence in 1961 and shortly after were fast disappearing. Institutional gangrene and ideological anaemia were setting in, and there was a prevalence of injustice. The few who had attained power battened the doors after them and arrogated to themselves the right to determine who entered the state system, whose reach was extended so wide as to suffocate every form of private initiative. The masses were

forced to their knees and became inured to poverty, deprivation, ignorance and listlessness and to live at the mercy of nature and the elements.

In the early days of the struggle, especially in the turbulent 1970's and 1980', moroso with the frequent students demonstrations and trade union activities, study groups and cells were established all over Sierra Leone to learn, inform, educate, sensitize and conscientize. The experiences derived during this phase revealed the stark reality that the societal disease was so deep-rooted and far advanced that nothing but an armed struggle would provide a cure. The decision therefore to take up arms was not taken lightly but rather imposed itself in the absence of any viable and serious alternative. It is the inevitable result of the realization that the social, economic and political calamity that had struck Sierra Leone was no passing phenomenon and would sediment if nothing drastic was undertaken to combat it.

The political beneficiaries of the rotten system were willing to freely use the extremes of violence to control and contain the anger and frustrations of the dispirited masses. The sensitization and conscientization exercise had taught that the people needed, first, to be empowered in order, secondly, to use the power thereby gained to create wealth for themselves, reconstruct a new and vibrant society, and live a useful and meaningful life that would merge the highest ideals of the inherited past with the looming challenges of the present and future.

It is to deny the facts of history and those on the ground, and to confuse and conceal the crimes committed by various governments and their backers to lay the charge of the committal of brutal activities solely on the doorstep of the RUF/SL or to claim that the latter has no programme or vision. As one connoisseur of the Sierra Leone situation has objectively observed: "the war has a clear political context and the belligerents have perfectly national political aims... Failure to communicate that vision owed more to the poverty, incompetence, and sectarian isolation of the movement than to any inherent trend towards anarchy." (Paul Richards, *Fighting for the Rain Forests*).

When Sierra Leone won her political independence on 27 April, 1961, amid all the pomp and ceremony, it was everybody's hope that the changing of the guard from the colonial to the indigenous masters would open up new vistas of opportunity and fulfillment. The hope was buoyed up by the confident knowledge of the natural advantages of weather and resources that the country is so richly endowed with. The take-off at independence therefore held much promise and at least until 1967 the climb was reasonable and manageable. Education, for instance, was essentially available and affordable, health provision was passable, transport and communication were operational, there was self-sufficiency in food production and even an exportable surplus, and politics was practised with considerable civility and an awareness of the necessity and significance of responsibility, responsiveness and accountability. There were the beginnings of the building of trust between the leaders and the people. In sum, Sierra Leoneans were at independence high on aspirations and expectations and believed that the aircraft that had taken off was going to take them to the New Jerusalem in relative safety and security.

The first major sign of turbulence was felt in 1967, after the general elections held in that year. The aircraft was buffeted by airpockets of political chicanery which found its clearest

expression in the first coup d'état to be made in the country. This coup denied Sierra Leone the full savouring of pride in being the first country in the continent in which the government was defeated by the opposition in a democratic election. The aircraft was forced to make an emergency landing and since then it has found it almost impossible to take off and be airborne, or to reach a comfortable altitude and cruising speed and to maintain a steady course. The complacency that had lulled Sierra Leoneans into the immodest proclamation of "a land of diamonds" and "Athens of Africa" was thus shattered and the take-off to modernity and sustained socio-economic and political development unmasked as a series of false starts, wrong turnings, misplaced confidence and a damp squib. This became more evident during the almost three decades long rule of the APC under Siaka Stevens and his successor Joseph Saidu Momoh.

The people of Sierra Leone have not benefited from the country's riches in, among others, diamonds, gold, bauxite, iron ore; an agreeable agriculture climate; abundant supply of fish; beautiful sandy beaches; nor have they been allowed to enjoy the advantages of their good-naturedness and fear of God. A small group have abused their positions and responsibilities and presided over the looting of the country to the extent that Sierra Leone is classified under the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Human Development Index as one of the poorest countries in the world and Sierra Leoneans as among the most wretched of the earth.

Thus the picture of a different kind of Sierra Leone has come to full view, one of a country in deep social, political and economic crisis; a country unable to meet its people's most basic needs and that drag them down to the depths of poverty, hunger, disease and deprivation; one with high levels of infant and maternal mortality and miserable living standards; that has grown grotesquely inegalitarian and where the leadership is arrogant, estranged from the people and lacks integrity and honesty; and where widespread tribalism, nepotism, incompetence and inefficiency have chafed away at social cohesion and provide an almost routine fare of strife and disharmony.

It is this crisis that the RUF/SL is struggling to resolve. The struggle is for social justice and the equal distribution of the nation's wealth, for establishing a new political system that would meet the real aspirations of the people, for creating a new dispensation that would alter the political, economic and socio-cultural landscape and transport Sierra Leone into the twenty-first century and beyond. In the words of the leader, Cpl. Foday Saybana Sankoh: "We are fighting for a new Sierra Leone... for democracy... We continue to fight because we are tired of being perpetual victims of state sponsored poverty and human degradation visited on us by years of autocratic rule and militarism. But, we shall exercise restraint and continue to wait patiently at the rendez-vous of peace, where we shall all be winners. We are committed to peace, by any means necessary, but what we are not committed to is becoming victims of peace. We know our cause to be just and God/Allah will never abandon us in our struggle to reconstruct a new Sierra Leone." (Footpaths to Democracy: Toward a New Sierra Leone, Vol. 1, p. 19). The struggle continues because the people are still denied proper health and education, a tolerable standard of living, the scope and opportunity to develop economically and culturally, as well as to participate fully and effectively in government.

When the National Provisional Ruling Council (NPRC) coup d'état chased Joseph Saidu Momoh from power in 1992, the RUF/SL took the initiative and stretched out an olive branch to the new government asking for peace talks and offering to declare a unilateral cease-fire. The offer was rebuffed and the NPRC, assured of outside support (by Ghana, Guinea and Nigeria) decided to continue the war with a determination to defeat and exterminate the RUF/SL. We had expected that the international community would denounce and condemn the NPRC's opting to continue a policy of war, but this did not happen. Nevertheless we were undeterred and in 1996 we encouraged contacts with Brigadier Julius Maada Bio, who had ousted Captain Valentine Strasser in a palace coup. We were hoping that we could now seriously sue for peace and close the chapter of war and reintegrate ourselves into society.

By this time there was mounting pressure for the holding of general elections, despite the fact that the war was still continuing and appeals were being made by the Peace Before Elections Campaign, the military and prominent citizens in the country for the postponement of the elections until peace was first achieved. The political parties, spurred on by the international community, including Britain, which donated seventeen million dollars, in addition to other large sums from major donor countries and institutions, insisted that the elections could and should be held. In the end the elections were held, using a Proportional Representation System that was totally alien to Sierra Leone. The obvious intention was to minimize the disruptive effects of the ongoing war in polling areas during the elections, as well as to help the Interim National Electoral Commission (INEC) make any necessary adjustments in the collation of the voting figures.

As was indeed expected and even predicted the elections turned out to be very controversial and hopelessly flawed. For instance, objections to the figures by the United National Peoples Party (UNPP) presidential candidate, Dr. John Karefa-Smart, were upheld. In response, the Chairman of INEC, Dr. James Jonah, simply juggled the figures by deducting seventy thousand (70,000) votes from the SLPP presidential candidate, Alhaji Dr. Ahmad Tejan Kabbah, and gave them to Karefa-Smart. Western diplomats in Sierra Leone joined Jonah in putting pressure on Karefa-Smart to accept the adjusted result and concede defeat, arguing that any challenge of the result in the courts would only serve to prolong the stay of the NPRC military government in power. In view of widespread attacks or the fear of such attacks by fighters of the RUF/SL, voting could not take place in at least one-third of the country and where it did take place at all fear led to a low voter turnout. In effect, therefore, more than 30% of the eligible electorate were disenfranchised. Moreover, the novel system of Proportional Representation introduced for the first time in the country" history denied the voters the one opportunity they had left of choosing their preferred representatives to parliament on the basis of geographical constituencies, as was the constitutional requirement.

Instead, political parties were left to select their own Members of Parliament (MPs), based on the percentage of votes gained. The parliament, which emerged from these February/March 1996 elections, did not therefore owe any loyalty to the citizenry but rather to the political party bosses. It became weak, ineffective and unaccountable to the constituencies. It degenerated into a forum where MPs scrambled to make speeches to catch the attention of President Kabbah and thereby benefit from his patronage. Thus, parliament and the

executive soon became locked in the insidious embrace of mutual admiration and assistance.

Although the RUF/SL had been invited to participate in the 1996 elections as part of the peace initiative with the NPR government, it was inauspicious for it to accept the invitation. There was not sufficient time for it to be transformed into a political party and to put in place the suitable arrangements to enable it to comply with the requirements of participation, as well as to mount an effective challenge against the other contesting parties. Sierra Leone was thus subjected to the parody of democratic elections before peace had been secured. The people accepted this development because, in their eagerness for constitutional rule, they calculated that any alternative to the rule of the youthful NPRC government, with which they had become thoroughly disgusted, was tolerable, and felt thus that they should endure the election. They hoped that in the short term their troubles would be assuaged.

Following the initial contacts with his immediate predecessor, Julius Maada Bio, President Kabbah made further preparations which ended in the signing of the Abidjan Peace Agreement on 30 November, 1996. Both the government and the RUF/SL had acknowledged the need for a just and durable peace in Sierra Leone, and for genuine national unity and reconciliation to end the fratricidal war; they had committed themselves to the promotion of popular participation in government and full respect for human rights and humanitarian laws, and to the advancement of democratic development and the maintenance of a socio-political order free of inequality, nepotism and corruption; they were determined to foster mutual confidence and trust; and they were convinced that a sense of common purpose and patriotism was the need of the hour.

This Agreement had raised the hopes and expectations of the long-suffering populace but President Kabbah went on to deceive the nation and the world by deliberately refusing to comply with its terms. In the first place, he failed to take it to parliament within 21 days as required under the constitution. This rendered it legally useless. Secondly, in the early part of 1997, an RUF/SL delegation had been sent to Freetown to join their counterparts in the government to start work in the Committee for the Consolidation of Peace (CCP). As their work progressed, however, President Kabbah conspired with the members of the RUF/SL delegation to undermine the leadership of the organization. Consequently, the delegation announced that they were breaking away from the RUF/SL to form a new faction, which was instantly recognized by the president in a specially released public statement from State House.

Thirdly, senior members of the Special Task Force (STF), which had fought alongside the Sierra Leone Army (SLA) against the RUF/SL until the end of 1996, have disclosed that they had been forced to break ranks with the government forces because of the President's dishonest behaviour. He had asked the STF, on the day in which the Agreement was signed (30 November, 1996), to attack RUF/SL positions across the country. When the STF refused, they were demonised and shortly after, the Kamajor militias launched a series of armed attacks against the STF in the east and south of the country, including Mattru Jong, Sierra Rutile, Taiama, Mile 91, Magbosi, Kenema, Bonthe Island, Matotoka and Moyamba. In evidence given at the 1998 Court Martial, the late Col. Max Kanga, a former Army Chief of

Staff, similarly revealed that the president had used a joint force comprising the SLA, South African mercenaries and the Kamajor militias to attack the important RUF/SL base at Camp Zogoda in the Eastern Province. When the news of that successful attack was released, government claimed that the attack had been carried out exclusively by the Kamajors, who have no legal status. This was an obviously convenient ploy by the government to conceal its blatant violation of the Abidjan Peace Agreement.

President Kabbah was part and parcel of the conspiracy to have Cpl. Foday Sankoh detained in Nigeria. The leader of the RUF/SL had gone to Nigeria as part of a planned tour of the sub-region to solicit support for the full implementation of the Agreement, and also to garner assistance in halting the hostilities that had arisen between the Kamajors and the SLA.

It was during this detention that at the dawn of 25 May, 1997, President Kabbah was ousted in a coup pioneered by the sons of ex-servicemen of the SLA and the new regime, the Armed Forces Revolutionary Council (AFRC), appealed to the RUF/SL and all the militia forces to lay down their arms and join in seeking lasting peace and stability. The RUF/SL decided to accept the invitation and as such agreed to end all hostilities and come out of the bush with their weapons. It is worth recalling here that similar appeals by previous governments, including the Kabbah government, had not been heeded because of their insincerity. Thus, for nine months of AFRC rule, the RUF/SL was out of the bush trying to effect reconciliation and to heal the wounds of conflict.

When President Kabbah first assumed the presidency in 1996 he had been expected to show more caution, maturing and sensitivity in dealing with the military. Unfortunately, scarcely had he been ensconced at State House than he started down the road of confrontation, shortsightedly dismantling the system and deliberately marginalising and disadvantaging the army, vis-à-vis the militias. Soldiers were arbitrarily discharged and officers retired without paying them their earned entitlements or making appropriate arrangements for their reintegration into civil society. He replaced top-ranking officials in the bureaucracy, judiciary and military wholesale by mostly party supporters and members of certain ethnic groups, and also by Nigerians. In a bid to downsize the army, Kamajors were encouraged to target the army, many of whom fell prey to their vicious attacks. In was against this background that President Kabbah ordered a Special Investigation Panel, headed by a Nigerian, Col. O. Majoycogbe, to investigate an alleged coup plot in which the Chairman of the AFRC, Lt. Col. Johnny Paul Koroma, was implicated. Among other things, the Panel found that the president had alienated himself from the military, of which he was Commander-in-Chief, and concluded that if the inadequacies of welfare, low morale and logistics of the Armed Forces were not immediately addressed, there will be no end to coups against any government in Sierra Leone. President Kabbah elected to ignore Col. Majoycogbe's analysis, warning and recommendations to his peril.

Despite President Kabbah's demonstrations of bad faith and his interminable conspiracies, we are deeply persuaded that time and the lives of the people of Sierra Leone are too precious to be wantonly sacrificed on the altar of mistrust and recrimination. We believe that no useful purpose will be served by indulging in name-calling, hateful finger-pointing and indecorous mudslinging. Just as we have shown patience, courage, self-restraint, flexibility and accommodation with regard to talks which culminated in the Abidjan and

Conakry Peace Accords, so are we prepared, even in the face of current difficulties and provocations, to demonstrate earnestness, patriotic dutifulness and selfless responsibility this time round also. We believe most assuredly that the answer to the conflict and crisis in Sierra Leone is not to be found in supplying lethal weapons to Nigerian soldiers to "roll back the rebels," or arming and training Kamajors and handpicked civilians. Nor can it be sought by preaching hate and disunity among the citizenry. We are deeply conscious that it is going to take some time and effort to break down the wall of hatred that now divides our country, to heal the hearts wounded by anger, division, jealousy and intolerance, and to build a nation of love, justice, mutual respect and peace. We recognise that peace and order need to be restored urgently, in order that we can heal and reconcile sufficiently to be able to turn hatred to love, sorrow to joy and conflict to peace.

In Sierra Leone today, there are new realities that demand new adjustments on all sides. The new alliance forged between the RUF/SL and the SLA, for instance, should indicate clearly that the determination of the British to support Nigerian troops to subdue us will simply not succeed. It would merely be continuing to inflict misery on our poor helpless people to believe that the defeat of our forces that has not been possible in over eight years is feasible in the current circumstances. We have not and will not let up in our commitment to the defence of the sovereignty and territorial integrity of our country and its best national interests. Our patriotic obligation demands no less. The frantic efforts currently made to disband the national arm and replace it with Nigerian soldiers and Kamajor militias is totally unacceptable and serve only to compound the situation and fuel our resolve to resist.

For us, peace is of the essence and the sooner we can have it the better. It is a sine qua non, the fertile soil on which we hope to cultivate a new national consensus, on the basis of which we can pursue sound socio-economic policies and nurture a real democratic culture and practice meaningful democratic policies. The dreadful state of affairs that presently obtains can no longer be allowed to continue. Every true patriot and genuine sympathizer must now be convinced that bloodshed and destruction are not an option or answer and can and should and must be ended. We cannot begin to heal and reconcile if we harbour grudges, hate and vengefulness, especially when they are wrapped in fine speak and served up as justice. We just not permit the cycle of wickedness and hideous violence to be enlarged. On the contrary, we must break it, something which demands enormous courage, magnanimity and resolution and that must be done with the absolute minimum of delay. We believe therefore that the unceasing preparation for and actual prosecution of the war by the Kabbah government does not create the proper climate in which the development of lasting and meaningful peace can commence and thrive. In this regard, the government should cease to encourage those governments like Great Britain which pride themselves in providing funds to rearm the Economic Community of West African States Monitoring Group (ECOMOG) and provide mercenaries and hired guns to stoke the fire of the conflict rather than to put it out once and for all.

The Abidjan Peace Agreement attests to the RUF/SL's commitment to the search for peace and belies all the attempts to assign to it blame for the continuing conflict as well as all atrocities. This commitment was again shown in the acceptance of the AFRC's invitation and the subsequent nine-month long pursuit of a peaceful resolution of the Sierra Leone crisis, despite provocations and aggressive actions. During these nine months several meetings



were held to discuss the crisis but the AFRC was invited to only three meetings with the ECOWAS Ministerial Committee.

Throughout this period the ECOWAS Committee was obsessed with only one thing, i.e. their so-called mandate to reinstate Tejan Kabbah. It was in the name of this mandate that the Nigerian Army escalated its routine and indiscriminate bombardment of Sierra Leone, causing severe loss of life and damage to property. It was only the acceptance by the AFRC at the Conakry meeting, of Tejan Kabbah's reinstatement that satisfied the Committee. The AFRC negotiated in Conakry in the utmost good faith and belief that for once Kabbah and his mentors would see reason, wake up to the new realities and deploy every effort to relieve the distressed people of Sierra Leone of their imposed misery.

The Conakry Agreement recognised Cpl. Foday Sankoh as the RUF/SL leader and his role in the peace process, hence it expected him to be released from his unwarranted detention in Nigeria to make his contribution. Instead he was handed to Tejan Kabbah and was paraded on Sierra Leone Television in handcuffs. He was later charged with treason, convicted and sentenced to death. No statement was obtained from him at the outset, he was not represented by a lawyer and his request for witnesses was overruled by the trial judge. Only for his participation in the anticipated peace talks in Lome, Togo has he been allowed to travel under restrictions pending the outcome of the talks.

The Agreement also provided immunities and guarantees to the leaders of the coup. However, the Kabbah government conducted three separate treason trials and a Court Martial involving AFRC members and suspected collaborators. 24 of the accused persons in the Court Martial were executed, 42 civilians in the Treason Trial were sentenced to death by hanging, and others received long term jail sentences. During the Treason Trials the Attorney General, Solomon Berewa, stated in open court that the government never had any intention of complying with the Conakry Peace Agreement.

After his reinstatement in 1998, President Kabbah announced to the country and the world that the back of the People's Army had been broken and what remained were ill-equipped remnants. In January 1999, however the so-called remnants invaded the capital, Freetown, and Kabbah and his team had to flee, living behind the people helpless and unprotected. Even the United Nations Peace Monitors who had been sent for the disarmament and demobilisation exercise were caught in this deception and they too had to flee as the People's Army marched into Freetown.

Both the Abidjan and Conakry Peace Agreements were aborted because of lack of sincerity and commitment on the part of the Kabbah government. It is now time, therefore, to be serious and committed and to draw the necessary conclusions from the failure of these two earlier agreements. We firmly and unequivocally share the aspirations and desire of all Sierra Leoneans for a genuine and lasting peace and reconciliation in our beloved country. In this regard, we consider that we should all work toward creating a climate where lasting peace becomes a reality and not a dream. We wish to fully participate in building this climate where we all share the prize of peace. The desire for genuine and lasting peace should not and cannot be mere words but must be by affirmative actions and deeds. It should not or could not be predicated upon a preparation for war.

After the past eight years of our liberation struggle, which we commenced with reluctance, it is now crystal clear that our conflict is essentially socio-political and cannot be resolved by military means but through genuine negotiation. It is in this regard that peace talks must be seen as an important first step in creating the necessary environment in which confidence-building and respect-restoring measures can be pursued and installed. In saying so, however, we must enter a caveat, because, as the leader of the RUF/SL so aptly puts it: "We deem as more dangerous the quick-fix and prescriptive hidden-agendas of self-seeking mediators. We have every right to be suspicious of those who have made careers out of Africa's plight. They invariably end up as meddlers in internal conflicts prolonging the suffering of our people." (Footpaths to Democracy: Toward a New Sierra Leone, Vol. 1, Prologue). After taking sides in this conflict, it is now time for the international community to restore its bona fides by being proactive and even-handed.

We do believe that an important first step in the process of the peace we are inaugurating would be the immediate and unconditional release of the RUF/SL leader, Cpl. Foday Saybana Sankoh. All charges against him should be dropped, thus signposting a move away from the path of politics of revenge and recrimination into the highway of healing and national reconciliation. In the same vein, there shall be a blanket amnesty for all AFRC personnel and so-called sympathizers or collaborators, and all combatants with effect from the signing of the Agreement.

All hostilities should cease and a ceasefire be immediately established throughout the country upon the signing of the new Peace Agreement by the various parties.

We believe that there should be a new political landscape which should be underpinned by the setting up of a Transition Government which shall remain in power for a period of four years. This government shall have the task of establishing a proper democratic framework that is people-focused rather than leader-oriented.

The Transition Government shall appoint a Commission which should come up with recommendations about the creation of a structure, composition and training needs of a new SLA and police a security service; a corruption-free and efficient Civil Service; an independent judiciary and legal system; and government departments and parastatals. It shall, through the participation of all Sierra Leoneans and Civil Society, map out a new order in which tribalism, nepotism, corruption, economic and social mismanagement become an unwelcome thing of the past.

The Transition Government shall have the task of drafting a new constitution.

A Neutral Peace Monitoring Group shall oversee the encampment disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration of all combatants.

A Ceasefire Monitoring Group, comprising the People's Army, the Kamajors and the Neutral Peace Monitoring Group shall be responsible for monitoring, verifying and taking appropriate action against all violations of the ceasefire, and must be in place before any ceasefire is effected.

All foreign troops and mercenaries must leave Sierra Leone within fourteen (14) days upon the signing of the Peace Agreement.

The Transition Government shall ensure the encampment, disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration of all combatants upon the signing of the Peace Agreement.

A new National Electoral Commission shall be set up by the Transition Government to replace the existing Interim National Electoral Commission.

The Status of Forces of Agreement (SOFA) between the SLPP government and Nigeria shall be terminated with immediate effect.

The Transition Government, in partnership with appropriate agencies, should facilitate the repatriation and resettlement of Sierra Leonean refugees and encourage them to participate in the political process.

The Transition Government shall carry out a national population census to enable future elections to be held on the basis of constituencies. This exercise will enhance future national development programmes.

The RUF/SL shall be given every opportunity to transform itself into a political party during the transitional period.

The Transition Government shall suspend and review all business contracts entered into with the government and all other contracts relating to the mineral and natural resources of Sierra Leone.

With clear indications of failed economic policies of previous governments, the Translation Government shall have as its economic priorities the following:

To establish macro-economic policy,

To halt and reverse the economic decline, and

To enhance growth and sustainable development.

The following principles shall guide the above-mentioned priorities:

- a. The development process should be nationally driven
- b. All multilateral agreements relating to project implementation shall be reviewed and, where necessary, renegotiated.
- c. High dependence on foreign assistance (95%) shall be gradually reduced through the instrumentality of an appropriate policy that would make us self-reliant.
- d. The Transition Government shall exercise more co-ordination of NGO community activity and give it greater direction.
- e. The current privatization support shall be reviewed to ensure greater and more effective Sierra Leonean participation.

- f. Increased development support shall be given to the social sectors – Health, Education and Poverty Reduction Programmes.

The Transition Government shall introduce compulsory free primary and junior secondary school education, as well as free primary health care in the towns and villages for the vulnerable population. On-going health programmes shall be reactivated with special emphasis on prevention.

The development of human resources being a key ingredient in nation-building, programmes and institutions shall be established with properly crafted activities to provide the necessary educational and vocational skills for employment and self-reliance. The Transition Government shall therefore rehabilitate and establish new technical, vocational and higher institutions of learning.

The Transitional Government shall ensure properly harnessing of domestic resources, both financial and human, for self-reliance. This approach shall be followed before the submission of programmes for external financing and shall underpin the nation's development process.

Over the years, there has been rampant corruption in the public service, especially in the area of procurement. A more efficient and corruption-free procurement system shall therefore be put in place to make effective use of government's scarce resources.

The Transition Government shall ensure that inter-religious groups play a neutral and intermediary role when necessary, between the political sphere and civil society on national issues and that they participate actively in genuine national reconciliation programmes.

Presidential and parliamentary elections shall be held concurrently on a constituency basis. So too shall be district and town council elections. This will enhance development and good governance, especially at the local level, in the Chiefdoms where there are no Paramount Chiefs, elections shall be held during the transitional period.

We affirm and uphold the principle of a responsible press freedom, in particular, and of Human Rights and fundamental freedoms for all without distinction as to race, sex, language, or religion, in general.

The RUF/SL recommits itself to a peacefully negotiated settlement of the Sierra Leone crisis, which is what the silent, unheard people want. There is, a warning which is eloquently given in the words of the leader, Cpl. Foday Saybana Sankoh, in his statement in Abidjan on 30 November 1996, on the occasion of the signing of the Abidjan Peace Agreement: "Today, the battlefield has changed and the bullet is being replaced by the ballot. This means that the battlefield has changed to the socio-economic and socio-political field. Today we are happy and blessed to announce to the world that our slogan is LEADERSHIP, GOVERNANCE AND DEMOCRACY. If leadership fails, the people will take up arms again! If governance fails, the people will cry power to the people, and if democracy fails, the people will be denied their material and spiritual wealth, as well as well-being..."

War, despite its tragedies, is an important learning experience, an agent capable of effecting social change more rapidly than any other change. What we need at this juncture is the

consciousness of the imperative of building a new Sierra Leone more quickly and comprehensively, devoid of hunger, hate, malice and wickedness and filled with freedom and equality. For this great challenge we require enlightened leadership with a vision to fire the people of Sierra Leone with unequalled drive and purposes.