

**Statement by Minister Peter Power at the Consultative Group on  
Sierra Leone**

**London, 19 November, 2009**

Your Excellency President Koroma, Ministers, Co-Chairs, Development Partners, Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen,

Ireland has been a supporter of development in Sierra Leone since the early 1990s, but it is only relatively recently that we established a resident presence in Freetown, opening a mission in 2005. This represented a major upgrading of our relations and a commitment to partner Sierra Leone on its development and governance agenda.

One of the motivations for consolidating our engagement with Sierra Leone was the enormous potential we saw in the country, which is uniquely gifted in terms of its natural resources – both in physical and human terms. We saw in Sierra Leone a potential success story, of post-conflict recovery, transition, democracy building and ultimately development and we wanted to be part of that story.

The Irish programme in Sierra Leone is at something of a crossroads. Our previous country strategy has run its course and we are in the process of finalising a revised approach which will run from 2010-12.

Nationally Ireland has made the fight against hunger one of the cornerstones of our aid programme.

We have spent much of the last year implementing the findings of a Hunger Taskforce, which recommended that we ringfence a proportion of ODA for hunger-related programming, whether in the area of food security, agricultural productivity or the related areas of maternal and child nutrition.

This process has led us to a re-examination of our existing programme and has informed our strategic policy choices. The programme in Sierra Leone is no exception.

Equally, the principle of alignment with country systems and with the priorities of partner Governments is fundamental to our policy formulation. In the case of Sierra Leone we are extremely fortunate that the Government's own policy vision – as set out in the *Agenda for Change* – provides such clear guidance for its development partners.

Priorities such as increasing agricultural production and investing in infrastructure and human capital reflect Sierra Leone's desire to revitalise productive capacity and improve self sufficiency. We have taken our lead from this vision and our development programme will be fully aligned with the priorities set out in the *Agenda for Change*.

In terms of the detail, Ireland would expect to allocate at least €10 million to finance the *Agenda for Change* between now and the end of 2010. These funds will be used to support basic health services and nutrition for mothers and young children in line with the Government's own plans in this area.

We will also continue to work with the FAO and the Ministry of Agriculture to increase agricultural productivity, improve agro-processing capacity and, as a consequence, access to the domestic market for small scale rice producers.

Mr President

While funding is, of course, crucial, so too is the need to maximise the impact of our spending. Nationally, Ireland is strongly committed to improving the effectiveness of aid – an issue which has taken on greater importance than ever since the global economic crisis began.

In Sierra Leone, in common with our EU partners, we are committed to working closely with Government to prevent duplication and ensure development funding is well and effectively spent. We all have a responsibility to increase our use of joint planning, implementation and monitoring instruments. In particular, we must maintain a constant focus on development results and take joint responsibility with partners for their achievement.

Much credit is due to the Minister of Finance and Economic Development, Dr Kamara for finalising an excellent *Aid Policy* to guide future work in this area. We look forward to working even more closely with the Government and other development partners to operationalise this policy at sectoral and district levels and to define roles and responsibilities, modalities and time-frames for action.

I would also like to congratulate the Government of Sierra Leone on the very significant steps it has taken in the fight against corruption. In particular, we recognise the leadership shown by you, Mr President, in putting in place a strong legislative framework to underpin the work of the Anti-Corruption Commission. Corruption is the absolute enemy of development and we look forward to working with you to ensure its reduction and eventual eradication.

We have been greatly impressed by the Commission's thoroughness and professionalism and I am pleased to announce Ireland will provide €200,000 in support to the Commission in the coming weeks.

Finally, I would like to thank our British colleagues for hosting this Consultative Group meeting. It is clear from the high level of interest and engagement over the two days that the event has served as an important point of focus for those of us engaged with Sierra Leone. We look forward to continuing our close working relationship in the years to come.

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