

Consultative Group Meeting – Intervention Session
Remarks by Peter R. Hubbard, Director Office of West African Affairs
U.S. Agency for International Development
London, England
November 19, 2009

Mr. President, Ministers, representatives of the donor agencies, international organizations, ladies and gentlemen – good afternoon.

We support efforts by the Government of Sierra Leone and the donor community in Freetown to create a dynamic forum for coordinating assistance to make it more effective and reflective of the priorities set forth in the Agenda for Change. We applaud the work of the Development Partners' Group and the Development Partners' Committee (DEPAC), a joint Sierra Leone/Donor group chaired by the Minister of Finance and Economic Development to improve the effectiveness of donor aid. The document presented for review at this meeting, the "Sierra Leone Aid Policy", takes us a long way toward an effective mechanism to better coordinate our efforts but some of the details need to be worked out over time, such as the functioning of the technical/sector working groups and their relationship to the PRSP and proposals to make the DEPAC more operational. We agree that one useful next step could be a diagram as part of an action plan that describes the various coordination mechanisms and linkages among the groups. The success of this plan of improved coordination will require the support and effort of each donor and the government of Sierra Leone. It will be important to link more closely the ongoing monthly Donor Partners' Meeting group with the burgeoning work of DEPAC.

USG assistance through USAID's program in Sierra Leone is valued at approximately \$20 million in fiscal year 2009, plus \$7.6 million in PL480 food aid.

The Agenda for Change identifies illicit drugs and corruption as two of the three major risks to successful implementation of the plan. Aided by the U.S. Department of Defense, the United States is providing training in seamanship skills, leadership and management, and planning for interdiction planning activities to strengthen the capacity of the police, military, and civilians to address law enforcement effectively in Sierra Leone's maritime waters. We are also providing assistance with basic police training, including how to construct anti-crime programs, to improve the quality and professionalism of the police. Leadership training for mid-level officers would serve to reinforce and grow policing services.

Another of the Agenda's basic principles is good governance and an enabling environment for growth. This includes reform of public sector operations to be more accountable and transparent, and to fight corruption. Our support to local government: targets both the supply and demand side of governance, engaging elected officials and the local population. USG assistance through USAID programs has resulted in increased information flow in four out of the country's 12 Districts, thus increasing trust between communities and their councils.

The U.S. also supports the Special Court of Sierra Leone to address human rights impunities committed during the civil war.

Our assistance in the health sector is supporting the Agenda's objectives of reducing infant mortality and HIV prevention. In maternal and child health, we are training health care providers in maternal, newborn and child health and nutrition; and also employs proven approaches for increasing the knowledge and skills of pregnant and lactating women in health and nutrition to reduce maternal and child deaths. Through PEPFAR, CDC in collaboration with USAID and DOD is strengthening HIV laboratory capacity by supporting a high-quality antenatal care sentinel surveillance survey. It also assists the development of a roadmap for strengthening general laboratory capacity in Sierra Leone by supporting the formulation of a national laboratory policy and strategic plan.

The U.S. Government's priority for agriculture, food security and microenterprise development is to help Sierra Leone to meet its objective of increasing and diversifying domestic food production, to become food self-reliant and create wealth for rural poor. The President's declaration this year made agriculture the priority sector for the GoSL. The USG programs support this priority objective through the USAID-funded program "Promoting Agriculture, Forestry and the Environment" and "Livelihood Expansion and Asset Development" program to promote the development of value-added processed products, agribusiness and livelihoods opportunities for a growing youth population. Moreover, environmental degradation is recognized in the Agenda for Change, and USAID is supporting national resource management activities for forest conservation and bio-diversity. These programs support the food security and youth employment priorities of the Agenda for Change.

USAID has had a modest program in Sierra Leone for many years. I am happy to tell you that we expect to expand our program in the coming years to respond to and work in partnership with Sierra Leone on the Agenda for Change. We continue to emphasize democracy, rule of law, health and food security. We are asking our Congress to approve a level of \$24 million in development assistance and food aid in FY 2010 and a commensurate level in subsequent years. We anticipate a planned expansion that will include additional staff in our Embassy in Freetown to enhance our technical assistance programs.

Mr. President, Ministers, representatives of donor agencies and international organizations, we applaud the efforts to help Sierra Leone achieve its goals and vision for a vibrant and prosperous future. I know how resourceful and dynamic the people of Sierra Leone are having lived in Sierra Leone from 1982 through 1986. We (the USG) look forward to the continuation of our partnership with Sierra Leone in support of the country's Agenda for Change.

I would like to thank the Sierra Leonean government and the government of the United Kingdom for organizing this very successful event.

Thank you very much.

