

Your Excellency President of this 13th General conference of UNIDO

Heads of State and Governments

Our Distinguished Director General of UNIDO

Excellencies Ambassadors and Permanent Representatives

Colleague Ministers of Trade, Industry, Commerce, Finance, Foreign Affairs

Distinguished delegates

Ladies and Gentlemen

Thank you for giving me the floor.

Let me first of all bring you tidings from my Head of State who unfortunately could not attend this meeting he had talked so much about, due to other sudden national issues that had to be attended to.

I would also join the other speakers to thank the Government and people of Austria, and especially the municipality of Vienna for their gesture of hospitality, respect and friendship in hosting this meeting.

I should also congratulate you and the other members of your bureau for your appointment to the leadership of the bureau.

We endorse the position adopted by the Group of 77 and China and also the African group relating to the work plan and the reform of UNIDO.

Congratulations must also go to my countryman Dr Kandeh Yumkella on his appointment for a second term as Director General of UNIDO. I would also like to thank this forum for recognising your capabilities and for giving you another four years.

I congratulate you also on your appointment as Chairperson of the UN Energy Group and thank you for all your hard work and for making Sierra Leone proud. The progress UNIDO has made in the past four years is a testament to your hard work and resilience.

UNIDO had been very crucial and supportive to the membership on issues surrounding Industrialisation and has used the same vigour with which it partnered the

industrialised nations to support and guide the developing and Less Developed Countries.

We support the agenda for the next four years presented by the Director General especially the change management process which will make UNIDO more relevant to its members.

We live in times when the global transformation and environmental degradation affect all facets of the global population regardless of physical borders and the level of development. We therefore have a common interest in the future of our planet and we should all be committed to changing the future for the better.

UNIDO has promoted industry for development and has strengthened the linkages between its analytical, normative, convening and technical cooperation functions as well as providing policy advice to the public and private sectors.

Mr Chairman, Sierra Leone has rediscovered itself and since the change of government in late 2007, we have been

taking stock of what we have been doing over the years and why that did not lead to growth. The recent global economic problems proved it so painfully that as a rice producing country we actually had to seek food aid from other rice producers. This should not be mentioned in public.

We also considered where we want to go as a country and started working towards that. We had friends like UNIDO with us when we embarked on that journey.

I would like to share with you some policy responses to the challenges we faced as a country. In the interest of time I will concentrate on just a few.

We firmly believe that the SMEs in the country have to flourish and that there would not be any growth without them. We rely on them to champion value addition to our primary products.

We also believe that the capacity of these SMEs should be built up so that they too can respond to market and technological challenges.

Government has a role in creating the appropriate environment including the appropriate legal and regulatory framework and the infrastructure that would contribute toward reducing the cost of doing business in the country. Where there are financial constraints in developing the supporting infrastructure, then the private sector must be engaged using the appropriate PPP framework.

We also have to ensure that the banks and other finance providers play an active role and that they are supported by the ease with which they can realise assets offered as collaterals for loans.

Finally but by no means the least we should as government determine where we have competitive and comparative advantage. We should deal with rice and cassava and cocoa and coffee and ignore maize and sorghum that we can't even grow. To access the market, these goods must be produced to the acceptable standards and a standards Bureau that has been internationally accredited is necessary and has been supported by UNIDO.

Industrialisation is being gradually achieved in especially the LDCs in an inclusive, equitable and sustainable manner.

I cannot leave here without thanking the staff of UNIDO who I expect worked hard in putting together this forum, We continue to rely on them for their support to their Director General and to the members.

Thank you for your attention.