

PUBLIC ADDRESS

**The g7+ Global Perspectives on the Sustainable Development
Goals**

**Delivered by Dr. Kaifala Marah, Minister of Finance and
Economic Development of Sierra Leone, and Chair of the g7+**

Dili, Timor-Leste

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Your Excellency, Prime Minister Rui Maria de Araujo

Your Excellency Hon. Xanana Gusmao, Eminent Person of the g7+

Hon Emilia Pires, Special Envoy of the g7+

Honorable Ministers of Government

Honorable Members of Parliament

Senior Officials of Government

Members of the Diplomatic and Consular Corps

Civil Society Representatives

Members of the Press

Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen:

I bring you warm greetings from His Excellency the President Dr. Ernest Bai Koroma, his Government and the people of Sierra Leone; and from the g7+ group of countries.

It is indeed a pleasure and honor as Chair of the g7+ to be here in

Dili, the Headquarters of g7+ Secretariat. Let me start by thanking Madam Santana Cardoso, Minister of Finance of Timor-Leste for extending a kind invitation to me to visit this beautiful country. Let me also express appreciation on behalf of my delegation for the warm hospitality accorded us since our arrival.

I salute the Government and people of Timor-Leste for prior leadership of the group, making it a globally recognized voice for fragile countries, and for your continued show of commitment to the ideals of g7+. Let me also state that I have particularly enjoyed partnership with His Excellency Xanana Gusmao, Eminent Person of the g7+; and my friend and dear sister, Madam Emelia Pires, who was Chair before me, and now Special Envoy for the group. We owe a depth of gratitude to both of them for escalating the issues of the g7+ on the global platform. I am also grateful to all staff of the g7+ Secretariat in particular the General Secretary, Dr Helder Da Costa for their incredible support role.

I am highly honored to deliver a talk on the g7+ and proffer some perspectives on the Sustainable Development Goals. No doubt, talk of the g7+ is of contemporary relevance, as the world assembles in New York in a few days to adopt another 15-year global agenda, the Sustainable Development Goals. A side event has been organized where I will share the perspectives of the g7+ as we embark on this new journey.

Mr Prime Minister, ladies and gentlemen, please allow me to take you where we have come from before taking you into the future. At the g7+ Ministerial Meeting in Lome, Togo in May 2014, I was entrusted to Chair the g7+; to lead representation of 20 countries volunteering membership to a common approach to peacebuilding and statebuilding. In humility, I assumed the role of Chair of the group, and Co-Chair of the International Dialogue on Peace-Building and Statebuilding (IDPS) in Freetown during the Global Meetings of

the IDPS in June 2014.

Since then, there has been series of engagements and dialogue on the applicability of the New Deal, and for recognition of the peculiar challenges faced by fragile states in our efforts to achieve peace and development. From global advocacy on Goal 16 of the SDGs, to meetings with the President and Senior officials of the World Bank and IMF; from launch of the State of Fragility Report, to participation in various panel discussions; the g7+ has remained purposeful and strong.

Last year, at the 69th Session of the UN General Assembly, we hosted a side event and lobbied that peace and capable institutions are quintessential to sustainable development. We drew attention to the devastation caused by the Ebola Virus Disease in the three g7+ countries – Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone. To date, some 28,000 infections have been recorded, 11,300 lives lost, livelihoods severely

disrupted, communities shattered, revenues lost, and key macroeconomic indicators trending down.

Let me assure you that the Ebola tide is receding, but the existing state of fragility in these countries prior to the onslaught of the disease, revealed the importance of capable institutions to tackle emergency crisis such as EVD. I convey a message of gratitude from the Mano River Union for your moral and financial support, in the donation of US\$2million to the three countries, as part of the g7+ fragile-to-fragile cooperation.

Indeed, we are grateful for the show of international concern and solidarity in beating back the disease, as was the Pledging Conference organized by United Nations last July in New York, during which a total estimated US\$3.4 billion was recorded for Guinea, Liberia, Sierra Leone and the Mano River Union (MRU). As we thank the pledging countries and institutions for their generosity,

we urge them to honor their commitments in real-time, in order for the three countries and the MRU to deliver on their recovery programmes over the next two years.

Similarly, there are other member countries faced with conflicts of different sorts; some are at crossroads between war and peace, some live in constant fear of terrorism, and others from natural disasters.

We congratulate Afghanistan for successful Presidential and Provincial elections held in 2014; the g7+ stands with the people of Afghanistan in their quest for long-term security and stability. We encourage the leadership of Burundi to continue to exercise tolerance, to embrace national dialogue and chart a peaceful pathway to the country's future. The signs of political unrest in South Sudan are of great concern. We call on all parties to give the people a fair chance to begin the SDG voyage.

Our solidarity remains firm with citizens of the g7+ who face

violence, rape, insecurity, displacement, unemployment and other forms of vulnerabilities. Whatever the underlying cause of fragility, the consequent downing effects on institutions further threaten peace and stability.

In furtherance of our global visibility and influence, the Group has secured regular meeting schedules to advocate and discuss fragility issues with World Bank and IMF leaders. For example, during the Annual Meetings last October, the President of the World Bank, Dr. Jim Yong Kim announced a progressive increase in IDA allocation to Fragile and Conflict Affected States, and improvements in the Bank's focus on job creation. The Bank also appointed a Senior Director to coordinate g7+ issues.

We thank the Bank for their response to the Ebola crisis and the operationalisation of the Central African Republic Trust Fund. We wish to collaborate more closely with the International Labour

Organisation on job creation in our member countries. A G7+/World Bank monitoring framework has been developed assessing World Bank staff in FCAS and the use of country systems. The first survey under this framework took place just before the Spring meetings in April this year. Steps have also been taken to revise procurement rules and improve alignment of interventions with national plans.

In March 2015, we launched the State of Fragility Report in collaboration with the OECD. The report observed that by 2030, precisely by the end of the SDGs, some two-thirds of the world's poor will be living in FCAS; implying that fragility will be with us for the foreseeable future. Mindful of the implications of this forecast, we are lobbying for flexible financing windows to adequately respond to the special needs of fragile states. We are all witnesses to the fact that Official Development Assistance has not been at its best in years, and often inconsistent with local priorities. We have urged all Partners to use the New Deal as the guiding principle for our

engagement, and to reconsider the relevance of the Mutual Accountability Framework as a vehicle for addressing our legitimate concerns, and accountability for development resources. We appreciate the OECD for producing the report.

And so has been the productivity of the partnership with co-chair Minister Isabella Lövin of Sweden, who replaced Peka Haavisto of Finland in January 2015, in promoting the International Dialogue on Peacebuilding and Statebuilding.

This brings me to the main topic of the global agenda- the SDGs. Mr. Prime Minister, we the g7+ have looked at our scorecards on the eight Millennium Development Goals. Some of the 18 targets of the MDGs have been met, many challenges encountered, and many lessons have been learnt. We applaud this landmark blueprint to eradicate extreme poverty, achieve universal primary education, improve maternal health and combat HIV/Aids, malaria and other

diseases. As well as having different baseline statistics, it must be said that the conditions under which FCAS have run this race have been extremely hard and difficult.

Mr Prime Minister, ladies and gentlemen, as we transition from the MDGs to the SDGs, we in the fragile states are reminded of the following hard statistics: globally;

- more than 100 Million people are without shelter, another 760 Million without potable water;
- there are more than half a billion kids out of school;
- about 1.3 billion without electricity; and global poverty is nearly half of the population of the world;
- about 3 billion live on less than 2.5 dollar a day; and
- gloomy still is that by 2030 two-thirds of the world's population will live in fragile and conflicted affected environments.

Mr Prime Minister, ladies and gentlemen, if the world has to agree a new consensus for development, we the g7+ will have to bring to the fore conflict prevention, post-conflict peacebuilding, and promotion of durable peace and inclusive societies. And this is exactly what we have achieved with our g7+ advocacy.

The Sustainable Development Goals comes with 17 Goals, and I would like to highlight seven of them with closer links to the New Deal:

Goal 1: End poverty in all its forms everywhere

Goal 2: End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture

Goal 8: Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all;

Goal 9: Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and

sustainable industrialization and foster innovation;

Goal 10: Reduce inequality within and among countries;

Goal 16: Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels; and

Goal 17: Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the global partnership for sustainable development

Indeed, the universality of Goal 16 - peaceful and capable institutions, may apply to all countries at different stages of development, but for the 1.5 billion people living in conflict-affected situations around the globe, the premium on Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions is real-time worthy. We therefore congratulate ourselves for this noteworthy inclusion in the post 2015 development framework, and by the same token, thank all those who walked with us.

At this juncture, please allow me to applaud Madam Emelia Pires for her tireless efforts in helping us drive this through on the global agenda. We may be aware that Goal 16 of the SDGs has 12 measurable targets, each crafted with importance in its own right. At country level, we must commit to ensuring strong implementation and monitoring mechanisms, and we know we can do this!

So the very existence of g7+, and the recognition now accorded it at the global stage, is testament that development challenges can no longer be addressed in isolation and in piecemeal. This recognition and the gratification that Goal 16 is now a component of the new global development path, comes with responsibilities on our part. In this regard, I would wish to posit the following:

First, It meant that we have identified conscious pathways to peace and resilience, and to our own future; it meant that we have become much more aware of the diversity around us, and that we have

committed to respect the rights of others to participate in decisions that affect their lives; it assumes that country ownership measures will ensure adequate capacity of local institutions to manage such diversity, as well as promote social cohesion, tolerance and respect.

Second, in my capacity as Chair of the g7+, I wish Mr Prime Minister, to strongly urge your Government to support the g7+ Secretariat to develop an online monitoring portal to take stock of SDGs implementation in member countries. This can be done in collaboration with the OECD with results jointly published biannually.

Third, implementation of the SDGs has to be financed. The g7+ can and must take the lead in mobilizing domestic revenues in accordance with the ***Addis Tax Initiative*** as many member states are signatories to the accord.

Fourth, I have always held the view that there is strength in fragility. We only need to identify our pulses of strength to ensure we grow from within. In this regard, we will pursue the ***Conflict Prevention Initiative*** as recommended by the High Level Independent Panel on UN Operations in June 2015, which calls for the g7+, the G20 and the UN to collaboratively work on Conflict Prevention initiatives through building a broad coalition. We would wish that a major role is played by the g7+ Eminent Person – His Excellency Xanana Gusmao. We believe there is a lot the world can draw from political inclusion example of Timor-Leste.

Fifth, we must continue to pay particular attention to combating violence, inequality and poverty, empowering our women folks and youths. We will build on the progress we have made in advancing gender equality and securing legal identity. We know all too well, that transparent government and inclusive political processes are critical to the transformation we envisage.

Sixth and finally, - team work; as before, there is a role for all of us in the upcoming dispensation; as political leaders, as citizens, Civil Society Groups, NGOs, Development Partners, the Media, and everyone. To give the SDGs a chance to succeed, there is a fundamental imperative to collaborate and work together in productive ways.

In conclusion, Mr. Prime Minister, we need to be reminded that this time and age of ours has been the best of humanity's growth; this is a period when people are more likely to be literate and to be healthy, it is a time of incredible wealth and higher global growth rates, of awesome technological advancement and poverty reduction in many economies. But it is also a period when many nation states remain trapped by their differences, afflicted by disease, deficient in growth, and beset by political and economic challenges. We gather in this room knowing that this state of affairs is undesirable. And hence, we

have tagged ourselves as ambassadors for Peacebuilding and Statebuilding and change-makers in our member countries. This resolve is what brings us together as fragile states; and what brings us together to lift our nations out of poverty, and together we have taken significant strides.

Even as members of the group would wish not to be fragile, I see the g7+ maturing into a global architecture for managing international development cooperation in countries affected by conflict and fragility. With the New Deal up for renewal at the end of 2015, we are looking to fire up support for a new mandate across the OECD and the global development community.

We are all in the business of transformation; And we know that to transform our economies, we need to end poverty and share prosperity; But we must be under no illusion that for the sun of prosperity to shine on human horizon, we as fragile states have to

think it up, sweat it out, work it out and harness it from within. It is only then can we upload it from without – in collaboration with our partners. If that isn't the spirit of the New Deal, if that isn't the hallmark of country ownership, then we shouldn't be in the business of mutual accountability. Against this backdrop, let me reiterate that we are about to adopt a post 2015 development agenda with a promise to leave no one behind. As conditions are in respective g7+ countries, we begin this journey hopeful that we will harness the good experiences from implementation of the MDGs to stay on track.

Therefore, my tenure as Chair of g7+ will continue on the path of constructive engagements with leaders and institutions, both at global and local levels, for effective development cooperation, and to make a case for the financial and technical support we need to address the operational challenges envisaged on the road to meet the SDGs. I will continue to count on your support in this undertaking.

Mr. Prime Minister, distinguished ladies and gentlemen, I had the pleasure this morning of participating in the validation workshop on Timor-Leste's second fragility assessment. I thank the Government of Timor-Leste very much for this leading by example and hope that it will create a constructive dialogue among stakeholders.

I wish at this juncture to official launch the g7+ website which will be a useful source of information on the work of the g7+. Please find time to visit the website. www.g7plus.org

Once again, I thank the Government and people of Timor Leste for the warm reception accorded us.

The g7+ SALUTES YOU!

Thank You for your attention

