

# **The Presidential and Parliamentary Elections in Sierra Leone**

**26-27 February 1996**

**The Report of the  
Commonwealth Observer Group**

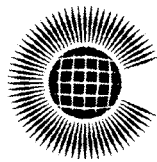


**Commonwealth Secretariat**

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**Commonwealth Secretariat**  
*1996*

Commonwealth Secretariat  
Marlborough House  
Pall Mall  
London SW1Y 5HX  
Britain

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**REPORT OF THE COMMONWEALTH OBSERVER GROUP TO THE  
PRESIDENTIAL AND PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS IN SIERRA LEONE**

26-27 FEBRUARY 1996

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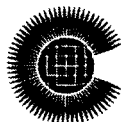
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## LETTER OF TRANSMITTAL



Sierra Leone Presidential and Parliamentary Elections, 1996

**Commonwealth Observer Group**

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Cape Sierra Hotel  
Chalet No. 24  
Aberdeen, Freetown

1 March 1996

*Dear Secretary General*

Following the request to you from the Government of Sierra Leone which was supported by all the political parties contesting the elections, our Group was constituted by you to observe the Presidential and Parliamentary Elections of 26 and 27 February 1996.

In our Interim Statement Issued on 29 February 1996, we expressed our satisfaction that the elections were conducted in a manner which provided the vast majority of the people of Sierra Leone with the opportunity to express their will through the ballot. We now have pleasure in forwarding to you our full Report.

We would like to take this opportunity to thank you most sincerely for inviting us to participate in this exercise which is vital to the future of democratic governance in this country, and for allowing us to contribute to the promotion of democracy and democratic processes throughout our Commonwealth association.

We do wish to record our deep appreciation to the Interim National Electoral Commission and the people of Sierra Leone for their assistance in facilitating our work.

*S. K. Singh*  
*S. K. Singh*

S. K. Singh  
Chairman


His Excellency Chief Emeka Anyaoku  
Commonwealth Secretary-General  
Marlborough House  
London SW1 5HX



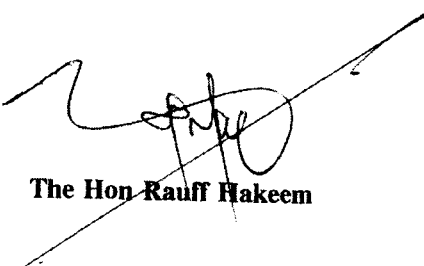
Mrs Georgina Chikoko




The Hon Jarso Jillo Falana



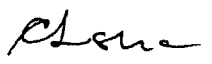
The Hon Terrence Gillette



The Hon Rauff Hakeem



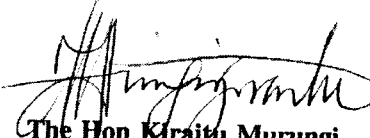
Mr David Adeenze-Kangah




Mr Charles Lasham




Mr William Montgomery



The Hon Kiraitu Murungi



Mr Cecil Pilgrim

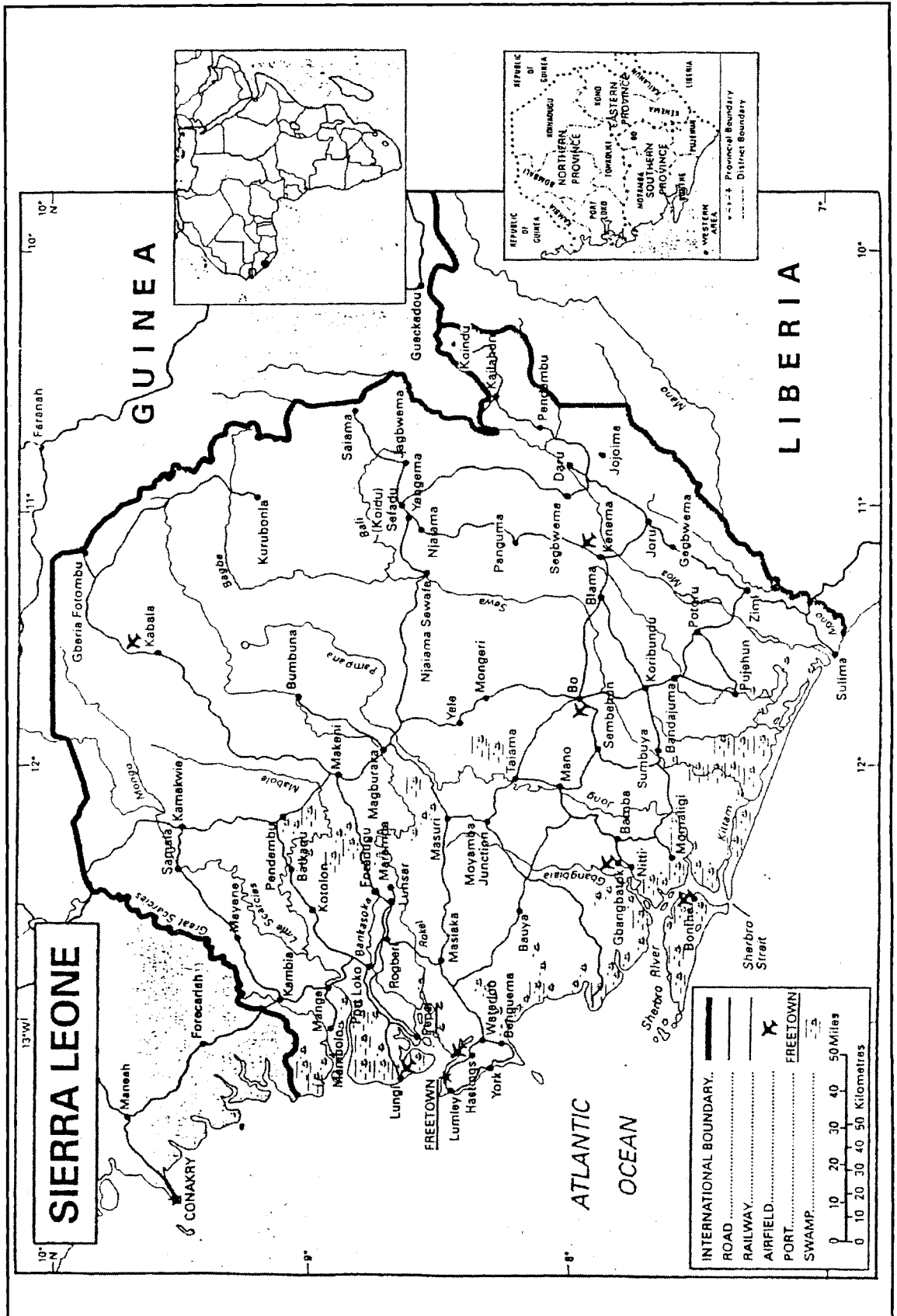


HE Tuiloma Neroni Slade



Mr Allister Sparks

# Map of Sierra Leone



# Introduction

In November 1994 the then Head of State of Sierra Leone, Captain Valentine Strasser, announced a programme for transition to civilian and democratic rule. It was subsequently decided that Presidential and Parliamentary Elections would be held on Monday 26 February 1996. In the event the elections were not completed on 26 February and continued into Tuesday 27 February 1996.

Captain Strasser and his successor, Brigadier-General Julius Maada Bio, invited the Commonwealth Secretary-General to send observers for these elections. In his response to Brigadier-General Bio's letter of 19 January 1996 the Secretary-General welcomed the invitation and agreed to send a Planning Mission to Sierra Leone to consult with all the major political parties 'in order to ascertain their support for the presence of a Commonwealth observer mission at the elections' and to make an initial assessment of the practical arrangements that would need to be made to facilitate the work of the observers.

The context for the Secretary-General's positive response was set by:

- Commonwealth commitment to the promotion of fundamental political values set out in the 1991 Harare Commonwealth Declaration and reinforced by Commonwealth Heads of Government in their Millbrook Commonwealth Action Programme on the Harare Declaration adopted in New Zealand in 1995, including 'democracy, democratic processes and institutions which reflect national circumstances, fundamental human rights, the rule of law and just and honest government';
- long-term involvement by the Commonwealth in encouraging and assisting the transition from military to civilian and democratic rule following Captain Strasser's announcement of November 1994.

The Planning Mission, consisting of three officials of the Commonwealth Secretariat, visited Sierra Leone at the end of January 1996. All the political parties contesting the elections confirmed that they would welcome the presence of Commonwealth observers. The Mission also held discussions with the Interim National Electoral Commission (INEC), Brigadier-General Bio and others.

## Composition and Terms of Reference of the Observer Group

It was against this background that the Secretary-General invited our Group of 12 Observers, supported by six staff from the Secretariat, to observe the elections on behalf of the Commonwealth. The composition of the Group is set out at *Annex I*.

The terms of reference of the Group as set out by the Secretary-General in his letter to us were as follows:

The Group is established by the Commonwealth Secretary-General at the request of the Government of Sierra Leone and supported by the political parties. It is to observe relevant aspects of the organisation and conduct of the elections in accordance with the law of Sierra Leone. It is to consider the various factors impinging on the credibility of the electoral process as a whole and to determine in its own judgment whether the conditions exist for a free expression of will by the electors and if the results of the elections reflect the wishes of the people.

The Group is to act impartially and independently. It has no executive role; its function is not to supervise but to observe the process as a whole and to form a judgment accordingly. It would also be free to propose to the authorities concerned such action on institutional, procedural and other matters as would assist the holding of elections.

The Group will submit its report to the Commonwealth Secretary-General, who will forward it to the Government of Sierra Leone, to the leadership of the political parties taking part in the elections and thereafter to Commonwealth governments.

Within these terms of reference the Group was asked to form an independent judgment which would in no way represent either the views of any government or of the office of the Secretary-General.

A press release announcing our mission was issued in London and Freetown, the capital of Sierra Leone, on 16 February 1996 (*Annex II*).

### **Method of Work**

We assembled in London on 16 February 1996 and were briefed by the Commonwealth Deputy Secretary-General (Political), Mr K Srinivasan, arrived in Freetown on 17 February and issued an Arrival Statement on 18 February (*Annex III*). Three support staff had preceded us to put in place logistical arrangements and to make appointments for our meetings. We were briefed by representatives of INEC, the political parties, non-governmental organisations, religious bodies, members of the diplomatic corps and representatives of the Joint International Observer Group co-ordinated by the United Nations. In addition, the Chairman of the Group met the Head of State. A full list of appointments is at *Annex IV*.

On 22 February 1996, the Group was divided into nine teams of two, which were deployed to seven centres around the country. Details of deployment are provided in *Annex V*. Two teams were kept in Freetown (to cover the Western Area of Sierra Leone, which includes the capital city). Two went to the Southern Province and were based in Bo, Sierra Leone's second city. Two more went to the Eastern Province (one based in Kenema and the other in Sefadu). Three were sent to the Northern Province (one each in Kabala, Port Loko and the provincial capital Makeni).

On deployment, these teams familiarised themselves with local conditions, contacted local INEC officials, consulted representatives of the political parties and religious and other community representatives and observed both the final days of the campaign and INEC's preparations for the elections. Particular attention was paid to the issues highlighted in the course of our earlier discussions in Freetown. In view of the security situation we also consulted with both police and military commanders. Despite communications problems a number of teams were able to send daily reports to our office in Freetown, using the guidelines reproduced in *Annex VI*.

We worked in close co-operation both with other international observers, who operated under the umbrella of the Joint International Observer Group, and with domestic election observers, some 300 of whom were deployed by the Council of Churches of Sierra Leone.

On Monday 26 February 1996 our nine teams witnessed the opening of polling stations (scheduled for 7.00 a.m.) and their closure (scheduled for 6.00 p.m., but extended to 8.00 p.m. on election day itself). We also observed the counting of votes at some polling stations that evening. During the day we visited polling stations at random, as security conditions allowed, inspecting polling arrangements and consulting with Presiding Officers, polling assistants, party agents and the voters themselves, using the Check List reproduced in *Annex VI*. Wherever feasible, reports were telephoned to our office in Freetown.

The elections were extended to 4.00 p.m. on Tuesday 27 February and members of our Group observed voting (which took place in centres where voting kits had not been available the day before) and further counting of votes prior to their return to Freetown.

An Interim Statement was issued on Wednesday 28 February 1996 (*Annex VII*), after the closure of the polls but before the results were known, and a press conference was held the following day. Before leaving Freetown, having finalised the text of this Report, we issued a Departure Statement to the Press on Saturday 2 March 1996 (*Annex VIII*).

# Chapter 1

## The Political Background

The Presidential and Parliamentary Elections of February 1996 took place against a background of:

1. Single party government from 1978, followed by the scheduling of multi-party elections for May 1992.
2. War from 1991 as the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) launched attacks across the country, and the exploitation of the deteriorating security situation by other armed elements.
3. A military coup in April 1992, followed by the announcement in November 1994 of a detailed timetable for transition to civilian democratic rule by the end of 1995.
4. Consensus at a National Consultative Conference in August 1995 that Presidential and Parliamentary elections should take place at the end of February 1996, using a system of proportional representation for the Parliamentary elections.
5. A 'palace coup' in Freetown in January 1996, followed by reassurances that elections would take place as planned the following month.
6. Last minute moves in January and February 1996 to postpone the elections in order that there should be 'peace before elections', and the rejection of this approach and confirmation of the 26 February election date by a reconvened session of the National Consultative Conference on 12 February 1996.

These developments are described in more detail beneath.

### Recent History

Sierra Leone became an independent state within the Commonwealth on 27 April 1961. The Sierra Leone People's Party (SLPP) won power in universal suffrage elections the following year, having previously secured majorities in pre-independence elections for the Legislative Council in 1951 and the House of Representatives in 1957. In further elections in 1967 the All People's Congress (APC) gained a majority of seats but its leader, Siaka Stevens, was prevented from taking power by a military coup. A counter coup the following year ousted the military government of the National Redemption Council and Siaka Stevens returned from exile to become Prime Minister of a civilian government. Sierra Leone was declared a Republic in April 1971 with Siaka Stevens as President.

The 1973 general election was not contested by the opposition SLPP and Dr Stevens was the sole candidate in the Presidential election held in March 1976. The SLPP did contest the 1977 general election, securing 15 of the 85 seats. But in June 1978 a referendum approved a new constitution providing for a one-party system and the APC became the sole legal party. President Stevens was sworn in for a seven-year term and the SLPP MPs joined the APC. In October 1985 Dr Stevens' nominated successor, commander of the armed forces, Major-General Joseph Momoh, received 99 per cent of the vote in a national Presidential election and was duly inaugurated President.

In March 1991 President Momoh announced that he welcomed proposals for the reintroduction of a multi-party system. A new constitution was approved by a referendum in August 1991, a number of political parties were subsequently legalised and in December 1991 their leaders undertook to co-operate with President Momoh in the establishment of a multi-party system. Elections were scheduled for May 1992.

### **April 1992 Coup**

The 1992 elections were never held. On 30 April President Momoh was overthrown in a military coup launched the previous day by members of the armed forces, led by Captain Valentine Strasser. The Constitution was suspended, the legislature dissolved, a National Provisional Ruling Council (NPRC) established (comprising 18 military officers and four civilians) with Captain Strasser as its Chairman and Head of State and all political activity suspended.

From the beginning, Captain Strasser insisted that the restoration of multi-party government was one of his Government's three priorities. In October 1993 he told Commonwealth Heads of Government in Cyprus that his Government would restore democratic civilian rule by early 1996 and the following month he announced a detailed two-year timetable for the transition leading to a presidential election in November 1995, legislative elections in December 1995 and the installation of a new civilian government in January 1996.

### **National Consultative Conference**

In December 1993 the Government ended the State of Emergency that had been imposed at the time of the coup and, to prepare for elections, established an Interim National Electoral Commission (INEC). In June 1995 the ban on political activity was lifted and in August 1995 a broad-based National Consultative Conference was convened at the Bintumani Hotel in Freetown to establish a national consensus on the election date and the electoral system to be used for the presidential and general elections. This conference agreed that the elections should take place not by the end of 1995, as had previously been announced by the Government, but in February 1996. Monday 26 February 1996 was subsequently announced as election day.

### **January 1996 'Palace Coup'**

On 16 January 1996 Captain Strasser was in turn overthrown in a 'palace coup' and replaced by his former deputy, Brigadier Maada Bio, who proceeded to 'reconstitute' the NPRC. The change of leadership was justified on the grounds that Captain Strasser wanted to manipulate the transitional arrangements in order to stay in power.

On 17 January Brigadier Bio confirmed that "the democratisation process ... continues unabated and is still on track towards the holding of presidential and general elections on 26 February this year" and assured the international community that "our commitment to restore this country to democratic civilian rule is irreversible". At the same time, he called on Corporal Foday Sankoh, the leader of the rebel Revolutionary United Front (RUF), to engage in dialogue with the Government, assured him of safe conduct and reaffirmed that the Government was prepared for talks without preconditions.

### **The War**

The RUF launched its guerilla campaign in 1991, ostensibly to topple the Freetown Government then headed by President Momoh, which the rebels regarded as corrupt. However, it continued the war even after the April 1992 coup which ousted President Momoh on the grounds that the NPRC Government was itself another rebel movement and therefore illegitimate.

The RUF's initial offensive in eastern Sierra Leone, allegedly supported by the National Patriotic Front of Liberia in retaliation for the Sierra Leone Government's support for ECOMOG forces in Liberia, was countered effectively by the Sierra Leone army. However, later RUF operations proved more difficult to contain, even with substantial military assistance from neighbouring countries, and the security situation was exploited by other armed groups, allegedly including lawless members of the armed forces.

By the end of 1994 rebel units were able to operate in almost every part of the country, RUF attacks were increasing in frequency and they were resulting in considerable loss of life and causing serious damage to the country's economy and infrastructure. In January 1995 the RUF gained control of important mining installations. By April RUF attacks were taking place close to the capital, Freetown.

The security situation has improved since then. However, at the beginning of 1996 the RUF still claimed effective control of part of eastern Sierra Leone, security could not be guaranteed in much of the south and travel by road remained hazardous outside the Western Area. A number of attacks at the end of 1995 and in early 1996 were attributed to the RUF.

The war has had a devastating effect on Sierra Leone. Some idea of the scale of the dislocation can be had from a UN estimate in November 1995 that the war had displaced some two million people – almost 50 per cent of the population.

Following the January 1996 'palace coup' the RUF dropped its demand that foreign forces must be withdrawn before peace talks could take place with the Government, replacing it with the demand that elections be postponed. The RUF declared a seven-day ceasefire and after radio discussions between Corporal Sankoh and Brigadier-General Bio, it was agreed that teams from the two sides should meet in Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire, on 28 February 1996 to work out 'modalities' for eventual talks between their leaders. Talks between the two teams actually began in Abidjan on Sunday 25 January.

### **Reconvened Session of the National Consultative Conference**

According to Brigadier-General Bio, the demand for 'peace before elections' on the part of Chiefs, community leaders and the people in the war zones on the one hand and on the other, the pressure for elections on 26 February as agreed at Bintumani placed him in a dilemma. On 7 February 1996, following a meeting between INEC and Brigadier-General Bio, it was agreed that in order to resolve this dilemma and establish a clear national consensus, INEC should reconvene the National Consultative Conference held at Bintumani in August 1995 for one day, on 12 February 1996.

The reconvened conference, in common with the August 1995 meeting, brought together representatives of the army, police, religious bodies, political parties, the Paramount Chiefs and non-governmental organisations. The proposal for 'peace before elections' and the postponement of the poll drew support from 14 speakers. But some 56 others, including all but two of the political parties, representatives of the Muslim Congress, the Catholic Church and the Chamber of Commerce and representatives of people in the areas worst affected by the war, expressed support for elections to be held as planned on 26 February. There was a strong view that peace and elections were not mutually exclusive and could be pursued simultaneously.

With a clear majority for 26 February and against 'peace before elections' the conference ended with agreement by acclamation that the elections should go ahead. There was deep concern, however, at a statement by the Chief of the Defence Staff that "we cannot provide the necessary security during the elections and at the same time fight the RUF".

On 13 February, the day after the Reconvened Session, Brigadier-General Bio confirmed that elections would go ahead as planned on 26 February and ordered the army to provide security for the poll.

### **The Political Parties and Presidential Candidates**

Fifteen political parties registered with INEC following the lifting of the ban in June 1995. Despite expectations that several of these parties would merge in order to give themselves a better chance in the elections, and attempts to form two major alliances prior to nomination day on 26 January, only two parties joined forces – the Coalition for Progress Party and the National Alliance Democratic Party. The National Republican Party did not submit candidates. By the end of January 1996, therefore, 13 parties were planning to contest the Presidential and Parliamentary elections, as follows:

<b>Name of Political Party</b>	<b>Presidential Candidate</b>
Democratic Centre Party	Abu Aiah Koroma
National Unity Party	John Karimu
People's Progressive Party	Abass Chernor Bundu

People's National Convention  
United National People's Party  
National Democratic Alliance  
All People's Congress  
National Alliance Democratic Party  
National Unity Movement  
National People's Party  
Sierra Leone People's Party  
Social Democratic Party  
People's Democratic Party (Sorbeh)

Edward John Kargbo  
John Karefa-Smart  
Amadu M B Jalloh  
Edward Mohamed Turay  
Mohamed Yahya Sillah  
Desmond Luke  
Andrew Turay  
Ahmad Tejan Kabbah  
Andrew Victor Lungay  
Thaimu Bangura

## Chapter 2

# The Legal and Administrative Framework

The basic law under which the Presidential and Parliamentary elections were held was provided for in the Constitution of Sierra Leone 1991 supplemented by a number of orders and decrees promulgated by the National Provisional Ruling Council (NPRC). The principal decrees were:

- The Interim National Electoral Commission Decree, 1994 (No.1);
- The Political Parties Decree, 1995 (No.7);
- The Political Parties (Regulation of Conduct) Decree, 1995 (No.14);
- The Franchise and Electoral Registration Decree, 1995 (No.15);
- The Electoral Provisions Decree, 1995 (No.16);
- The Presidential Elections Decree, 1995 (No.17);
- The Parliament (Number of Ordinary Members) Order, 1996;
- The Electoral Laws (Abridgement of Nomination Requirements) Decree, 1996 (No.1); and
- The Franchise and Electoral Registration (Suspension of Objection Provisions) Decree, 1996 (No.3).

The Constitution was adopted by popular referendum, and came into force on 1 October 1991. Substantially, it is of a model found elsewhere in the Commonwealth. It was to have been the 'supreme law of Sierra Leone': see Section 171(15). Barely six months later, the Constitution, or at least the conflicting provisions of it, was effectively suspended by the Administration of Sierra Leone (National Provisional Ruling Council) Proclamation 1992, issued on 4 May 1992 for and on behalf of the Armed Forces of Sierra Leone. The Proclamation declared that all provisions of the Constitution which were 'inconsistent or in conflict with the Proclamation or any decree made thereunder shall be deemed to have been suspended with effect from the 29th day of April, 1992' (the date of the military coup). The Proclamation also dissolved Parliament and suspended all political activity in the country.

During 1993 a special Commission was appointed to draft a new constitution. The Commission is believed to have produced a draft constitution, which was never published.

### Fundamental Principles

As far as we can determine, the fundamental and constitutional principles of state policy remain intact – that is, as under Section 5 of the Constitution: the Republic of Sierra Leone is a state based on the principles of freedom, democracy and justice; sovereignty belongs to the people from whom Government derives all its powers, authority and legitimacy. Chapter III of the Constitution deals with the recognition and protection of fundamental human rights and freedom of the individual, acknowledges, *inter alia*, the freedom of expression and the right to assemble freely and associate with other persons, and in particular to form or belong to any political party.

### Interim National Electoral Commission

Sections 32 and 33 of the Constitution provided for the membership and functioning of an Electoral Commission. Replacing these provisions the NPRC promulgated the Interim National Electoral Commission Decree, 1994 (Decree No.1, which was deemed to have come into force on 31 December 1993), which established the Interim National Electoral Commission (INEC).

The Commission was to consist of a Chairman and four other members. Its principal functions were to: compile a register of voters; demarcate electoral boundaries, subject to the approval of the NPRC; conduct and supervise all public elections (i.e., presidential, parliamentary and local government elections) and referenda; and educate people on the electoral process. Decree No.1 gave a measure of assurance for an independent INEC in that it provided that in the performance of its functions, the Commission should not be subject to the direction or control of any person or authority.

In fact, however, the detailed control of the electoral process lay with the NPRC, not INEC. Whereas (the suspended) Section 33 of the Constitution had authorised the Commission to make regulations for the registration of voters and the conduct of elections, at the time of these elections the power to do so was vested in the NPRC by virtue of Section 14 of the Interim National Electoral Commission Decree, 1994 – although admittedly, this power was to be exercised in consultation with INEC. Under the arrangements in force at the time of these elections, as noted above, the Decree prevailed.

The situation with regard to the regulation-making powers and the detailed control over the electoral process gave rise to acute problems for INEC, in at least two observable areas.

First, there were delays. Drafts of electoral decrees submitted by INEC to the NPRC often took a long time to be processed and promulgated, with an adverse impact on INEC preparations for the elections and their scheduling.

Second, draft proposals on certain matters considered as important by INEC failed to receive the NPRC's approval. We have seen, in this context, the INEC commentaries on the provisions of the Electoral Provisions Decree, 1995, the Franchise and Electoral Registration Decree, 1995 and the Political Parties (Regulation of Conduct) Decree, 1995. These commentaries provide INEC's detailed comments and criticisms, highlighting what INEC had required and what the decrees actually provided.

In respect of the Franchise and Electoral Registration Decree, 1995, for instance, INEC had proposed in its draft that INEC be given the authority in exceptional circumstances to set up new registration for displaced persons and for INEC to be given the right, as it considered necessary, to register refugees in camps outside Sierra Leone (i.e., Guinea and Liberia). When this Decree was promulgated (on 14 December 1995) the authorities omitted both proposals.

Eventually, through the promulgation of the Franchise and Electoral Registration (Suspension of Objection Provisions) Decree, 1996, issued on 23 February 1996 (three days before the elections), the NPRC authorised the registration of Sierra Leonean refugees in the Republics of Guinea and Liberia. However, there was insufficient time for INEC to mobilise staff and materials and elections could not be held in the refugee camps outside Sierra Leone.

### **Political Parties**

As we have noted, a prohibition on all political activity was imposed under the Proclamation of 1992. The prohibition was lifted through the promulgation of the Political Parties Decree, 1995 (No.7) of 19 June 1995. Decree No.7 provided (adopting the wording of Section 35(1) of the Constitution) that subject to the Constitution, political parties can be established to participate in shaping the political will of the people, to disseminate information on political ideas, social and economic programmes of a national character, and to sponsor candidates for presidential, parliamentary and local government elections.

The Decree suspended Section 34 of the Constitution which provided for a Political Parties Registration Commission. Instead, the Decree provided for the registration, by INEC, of all political parties, the prohibition of the use of certain names and symbols, the qualifications of executive and founding members, as well as office-bearers, and appeals against refusals of registration. Thirteen political parties contested the 1996 elections.

Another decree, the Political Parties (Regulation of Conduct) Decree, 1995 (No.14), provided for the submission to INEC of details of assets, accounts and audit of political parties, declaration of assets, liabilities and expenditure in relation to elections, notification of alterations to the constitution or rules, INEC's power, on application to the Supreme Court, to cancel registration, and the winding up of political parties upon the application by the Attorney-General to that Court.

Again, as we have noted above, INEC offered comments that were critical of the Political Parties (Regulation of Conduct) Decree on the ground, *inter alia*, that the NPRC had failed to make provision placing limits on political party spending during the election campaign, or on contributions to party funds by Sierra Leone nationals, companies or foreign nationals.

### **Electors**

Every citizen of Sierra Leone over 18 years and of sound mind has the right to vote and is accordingly entitled to be registered as a voter or elector for purposes of public elections (Section 31, Constitution). The Franchise and Electoral Registration Decree, 1995 (No.15) defined in detail the qualifications of electors, their registration and other aspects of the franchise, including the requirement that an elector be ordinarily resident in a ward on the date for the registration of electors. Under Section 2 of the Decree, INEC can divide Sierra Leone into wards for purposes of public elections.

Once registered on the Register of Electors, the elector is given a voter registration document. In order to vote in any election, the elector must present this to the Presiding Officer and the details must tally with the information on the electoral roll (Section 14(4), Decree). Secrecy of the ballot is a constitutional requirement (Section 36, Constitution).

### **Parliament**

The Parliament of Sierra Leone consists of the President, the Speaker and Members of Parliament (Section 73, Constitution). The legislative power is vested in Parliament which may make laws for the peace, security, order and good government of Sierra Leone.

Members of Parliament were to comprise:

- (a) 12 Paramount Chiefs;
- (b) such number of ordinary members as prescribed by the NPRC, being not less than 60: Section 2, Electoral Provisions Decree, 1995 (No.16).

By virtue of the Parliament (Number of Ordinary Members) Order, 1996 (published on 8 February 1996), the NPRC prescribed the number of ordinary members to be 68. A total of 80 parliamentary seats, in two separate elections (for the Paramount Chiefs and for ordinary members), was therefore contested in these elections.

### **The President**

The President of the Republic of Sierra Leone is Head of State, the supreme executive authority and Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces (Section 40, Constitution).

No person is qualified for election as President unless he or she is a citizen of Sierra Leone, is a member of a political party, 40 years old or over and is otherwise qualified to be elected as a Member of Parliament (i.e., is on the Register of Electors, and is able to speak and to read in the English language) (Section 41, Constitution).

A presidential candidate must be nominated by a political party (Section 42, Constitution). All persons registered as voters in public elections are entitled to vote. A candidate for election to the office of President would be deemed to have been duly elected where he or she was the only candidate nominated for the election after the close of nomination. But where there was to be a contest no person would be elected President unless he or she had polled not less than 55 per cent of the vote. Short of that threshold, and where there were several candidates, the two candidates with the highest number of votes would be required to go forward to a second election to be held within 14 days of the announcement by INEC of the result of the first election. The person elected President would not be allowed to hold office for more than two terms of five years each, whether or not the terms were consecutive (Section 46, Constitution).

In every presidential election, in addition to the presidential candidate, there must also be a candidate, from the same political party and on the same nomination form, designated for the office of Vice-President. The qualifications for the office of Vice-President are the same as those

for the office of President. The Vice-President is required to assume the Presidency in the event of the President vacating office whether by death, resignation or otherwise.

Subject to the Constitution, the executive power is vested in the President to be exercised by him directly or through Ministers of Cabinet who are appointed by the President.

The nomination of Ministers shall require approval by Parliament. No member of Parliament shall be appointed a Minister or Deputy Minister.

### **Paramount Chiefs**

As we have noted, the membership of Parliament consists of 12 Paramount Chiefs representing the 12 districts of Sierra Leone and 68 ordinary members. The institution of Chieftaincy, which is well established by customary law and usage, is guaranteed and preserved under the Constitution (Section 72).

In order to be a candidate for election to one of the 12 seats reserved for the Paramount Chiefs, a person must be a substantive Paramount Chief, whose name will have been duly gazetted before nomination. The register of electors for the Paramount Chiefs' election, which is prepared by the District Officer, is compiled from the Chieftain Councillors' list, comprising Paramount Chiefs, section chiefs and section speakers, town chiefs, heads of villages, taxpayers resident in the town or village (assessed on the basis of 1:20) and customary officials.

A separate election for the 12 Paramount Chiefs was scheduled to be held on Saturday 24 February 1996, with the District Officers performing the function of Returning Officers.

### **Proportional Representation**

At the elections of 26 February 1996, for the first time, Sierra Leone adopted the proportional representation system in choosing the membership of Parliament. By this system the voters were required to cast their ballot for the lists drawn up by the political parties contesting the elections. After counting the ballots, the seats in Parliament were to be allocated to the political parties concerned on the basis of the mathematical formula set out in the Second Schedule to the Electoral Provisions Decree, 1995 (No.16). It was also a requirement of the Decree that only a political party which had received 5 per cent or more of the ballots cast should be considered for the allocation of seats in Parliament.

The Second Schedule formula for the distribution of seats to participating political parties is expressed in the following terms:

1. (1) The total number of votes cast is determined.
- (2) The percentage of the total cast for each political party is determined.
- (3) Parties that fail to make the 5 per cent threshold are then eliminated.
- (4) The votes cast for the eliminated parties are then distributed on a pro-rata basis among those left.
- (5) The seats are then distributed on the final percentages obtained.

#### *Example:*

- Five political parties – A, B, C, D, E
- 100,000 total votes
- Party A – 40,000 votes
- Party B – 30,000 votes
- Party C – 25,000 votes
- Party D – 3,000 votes
- Party E – 2,000 votes

Parties D and E are eliminated because they fail to make the 5 per cent threshold. Their 5,000 votes are split among parties A, B and C, in the ratio of 4:3:2.5. The final percentage is then determined. The seats are then distributed based on these percentages.

2. Where the final percentage determined above yields a surplus fraction not absorbed by the number of seats allocated to the political party concerned, such fraction shall compete with other similar fractions accruing to any other political party or parties being considered for the allocation of seats, and any undistributed seat or seats shall be allocated to the political party or parties concerned in sequence or order of the highest fraction.

*Example:*

Using the 60 seats originally proposed for the ordinary members of Parliament, the above percentage formula will produce the following result:

Party A would win 25.20 seats; Party B, 18.90 seats; and Party C, 15.75 seats for a total allocation of 58 seats. In the distribution of the two remaining seats, Party B would gain one additional seat on account of its 0.90 fraction being the highest, and Party C would have the other remaining seat on the basis of its 0.75 fraction, being the next highest fraction.

### **Petitions**

The right to lodge a formal objection against the nomination of any candidate for election as President exists by virtue of Section 4 of the Electoral Laws (Abridgement of Nomination Requirements) Decree, 1996 (No.1). However, by the terms of the provision, the objection is required to be lodged after, not before, the election. The objection is to be filed in the High Court, and is to be treated as if it were a petition presented after the election.

In respect of the election itself, it is provided under Section 19 of the Presidential Elections Decree, 1995 (No.17) that any citizen of Sierra Leone may challenge the validity of the election of the President by petition to the Supreme Court within seven days after the declaration of the result of the election.

### **Observers**

It is a requirement of the Electoral Provisions Decree, 1995 (No.16) that during an election conducted under the Decree, the arrangements and other acts relating to the electoral process generally shall be subject to verification and monitoring by observers accredited by the Electoral Commission: Section 14(3). We were duly accredited as observers by INEC.

### **In Retrospect**

Our examination of the electoral laws of Sierra Leone reveals a framework that is rooted in the Constitution of 1991.

The parallel applications of the Constitution of 1991 and NPRC decrees inevitably resulted in tension. As will be evident from our survey of the electoral laws, there has been constant divergence of perceptions and views between the NPRC and INEC. Inescapably, this has also caused confusion. We suspect that confusion may not always have been accidental.

## Chapter 3

# Preparations for the Elections

### The Registration of Electors

For the purposes of registration, the country was divided into 2,553 Registration Areas. INEC appointed two registrars in each rural area and four in each urban area. In all 5,866 registrars were appointed and trained. In addition, there were also 20 co-ordinators and 350 Team Leaders. Registration Offices were established in the District and Chiefdom headquarter towns.



*Late additions ... last minute registration of voters. Following complaints of under-registration a five-day 'supplementary registration period' was held immediately prior to the elections. More than 90,000 additional voters were added to the list*

The chosen method of registration was that teams of registrars should visit people's homes to establish precisely who was entitled to be registered.

The process began in December 1995 but some problems were encountered in certain areas due to rebel activities. These security problems together with complaints from eligible electors alleging that they were out when registrars called and would therefore be disfranchised, led to an extension of the registration period until 31 January 1996. The method of registration was then reviewed and revised. Registration centres were established and people came to the registrars. This was a sensible arrangement and met the criticism of the

political parties that the door-to-door method of registration was inadequate. This change also assisted newly displaced people.

The next stage was the production and display of voters' lists. INEC used specially designed, computerised registration forms and high-speed scanners to process the information obtained by the registrars. This improved the accuracy of the processing and avoided the many errors associated with the manual inputting of data. The scanning took three weeks.

After the publication of the draft registers there were further complaints about under-registration, particularly in the south and east. This was understandable in view of the serious security problems in some areas. Registrars simply could not visit certain areas in safety.

The draft registers were displayed from 19-23 February, during which period names could be added to the register. Commonwealth Observers witnessed the later stages of this additional registration exercise.

In Bo, at the Coronation Field registration site, young girls dressed in school uniform were able to register unchallenged despite looking much younger than 18 years. While it is sometimes difficult to determine whether or not a voter is of the requisite age, our observers in Bo were unanimous in their view that children as young as 14 years were being registered at this site.



*Training ... here an instructor from INEC trains polling officials. INEC enjoyed widespread public confidence and a reputation for independence while its Chairman, Dr James Jonah, acquired the status of a national hero for his integrity and his determination to stick to the election timetable*

This failure to detect under age registration can be explained in part by the enormous pressure registration officials were facing. However, there can be no excuse for failing to ask pertinent questions about the age of an elector when he or she appears to be under age. The registration officials were trained to ask such questions, but in this respect they did not carry out their duties.

The registration of under-age voters was not restricted to Bo, as borne out by the other Commonwealth teams operating in different regions where under age voting was detected. However, the numbers of such under age persons being registered as voters were not significant, according to our observations.

It proved impossible for the printed registers used on election day to include the names of those registered during the five-day supplementary registration period. Instead, the printed registers which had been displayed from 19-23 February were used in conjunction with the registration forms completed by those who had registered during the supplementary registration period. This was not due to problems with the technology used by INEC but to too tight a timetable.

### **Voter Education**

The Commonwealth Group was briefed by an INEC official involved in the voter education programme. Television and radio broadcasts had been used and account was taken of language differences. A video recording was made on the polling process and this was used extensively. Members of the Group viewed the video and found it to be informative and effective.

Theatre groups were hired to visit towns and villages and INEC representatives attended many civic meetings. In addition, specially trained personnel had specimen ballot papers and other polling equipment which was used to inform the electorate on what they should expect on election day. The trainers concentrated on the layout of polling stations and the procedures to be followed on polling day.



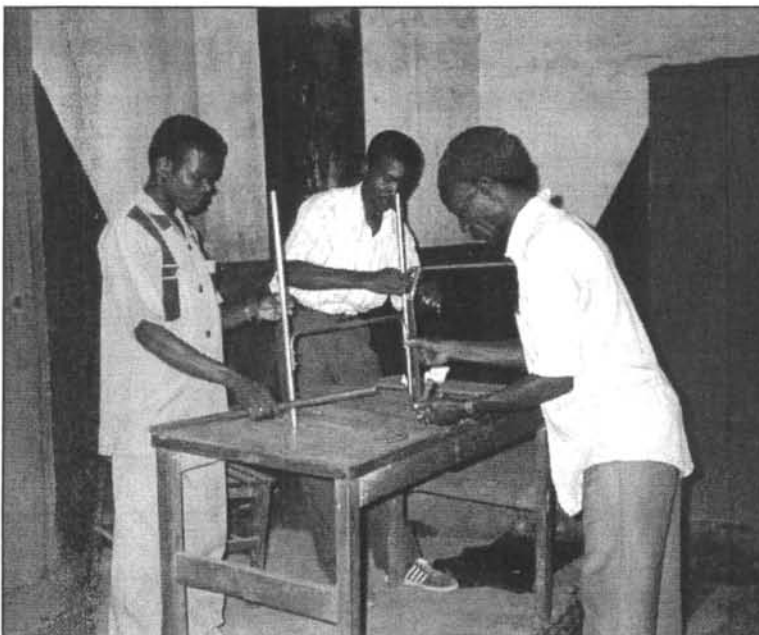
*Rehearsal ... a mock polling station set up by instructors from INEC provides polling officials with a realistic idea of conditions on polling day. Training sessions such as this were organised throughout the country in the run-up to the elections*

Particular attention was paid to the marking of the ballot paper, the way in which the ballot paper should be folded and the difference in the colour of the papers and the ballot boxes, distinguishing the Presidential ballots and ballot boxes from those to be used for the Parliamentary elections.

Political parties also held meetings of their supporters where the process was explained. One team attended a women's meeting where civic leaders and others demonstrated the voting process to interested women and men.

The Group was also briefed by the National Commission for Democracy (NCD). Posters produced by NCD were visible, particularly in Freetown, and the Group was advised that the NCD's role was to deal with the broader programme of civic education.

INEC made presentations to the Press and political parties on the electoral system to be used and produced a small handbook



*Setting up ... all the election day equipment came in special kits: here polling assistants practice assembly of the metal frame for the screened-off polling booth in which voters would mark their ballot papers*

on the voting process which was distributed throughout the country. It was encouraging to see ordinary members of the public reading and discussing the booklet.

When a country moves to multi-party democracy, voter education plays an important role in ensuring the smooth running of the electoral process. In a country like Sierra Leone where an estimated 80 per cent of the voters are illiterate, effective and well targeted voter education is crucial. INEC made efforts to ensure that the voters were properly educated in the voting process. The Group did witness some confusion among certain electors, particularly the elderly. This is understandable especially since these were complex elections and the system was new to the voters. It also indicates the need for a continuing voter education programme within Sierra Leone.

### **The Competence of Election Officials**

The division of responsibility for the organisation of the electoral process was as follows:

Presidential Elections Returning Officer	–	Chairman of INEC
National Parliamentary Returning Officer	–	Chairman of INEC
Provincial Returning Officers	–	INEC Provincial Commissioners
District Returning Officers	–	INEC District Election Officers

The District Returning Officers had the responsibility for the day to day organisation of the elections, including the recruitment of Presiding Officers and polling assistants.

It was obvious to the Group that training of Presiding Officers and polling assistants had come a little too late, in a number of instances. Trainers were trained centrally and that training was then cascaded throughout the regions. The Group witnessed training taking place on the day before the elections. There was not sufficient time to digest information, consider problems and ask meaningful questions. On the first day of the poll our Group witnessed on-the-job training of polling assistants. One Presiding Officer voted on an unstamped ballot paper and there was indecision over certain problems.

However, such incidents were few and staff proved to be efficient in the vast majority of cases and areas. A high level of competence was generally displayed at all levels.

The staff were as determined as the electorate to ensure that the elections were held and conducted properly. All officials showed remarkable courage in carrying out their duties. All election staff were under threat of attack. During the week before election day, shots were fired at the home of the Chairman of INEC and a grenade was thrown at the INEC offices in Freetown. Earlier, registration officials had been threatened. On election day itself polling was disrupted by rebel attacks, people were killed in attacks on the outskirts of towns and in town centres – and yet polling continued. This required determination and conspicuous courage on the part of the voters and all the officials connected with polling.

On election day, polling staff accompanied by party agents were seen leaving their stations with sealed ballot boxes on their heads, determined that these should not fall into the hands of those intent on disrupting the elections. After the battles died down they were seen returning to their stations with the boxes intact, along with accompanying party agents, to resume voting. Others carried on polling even while gunfire and mortar attacks were taking place not so far away. In certain cases the polls could not be opened on time because of attacks by rebels which began early in the day to cause as much disruption as possible. And yet when the firing subsided the election work resumed.

The Group came to have the highest regard for the courage and persistence of the INEC staff, from Chairman to polling assistants.

## Chapter 4

# The Media

A free, independent and professionally competent media network is an organic necessity in a democracy. Both the print and electronic media of Sierra Leone have in the last many years of authoritarianism become weak and emasculated, a fact which has left its mark on the political state of the country.

The evaluation of any election and the sustainability of the democratic process it ushers in, cannot be done without assessing the state of the country's media. A free, independent and professionally competent media provide the only means of communication between the Government and the mass of the people. It is the only means of keeping the electorate informed of the affairs of the nation so that it can exercise a rational choice at election time. An informed public is the only mechanism that can hold a Government accountable for its actions. The media alone provide an effective channel for continuous and wide-ranging public debate.

### The Print Media

The journalism of the nineteenth and early twentieth century Press in Sierra Leone was widely acclaimed as one of the best in West Africa. However, the print media in Sierra Leone today does not present a happy picture. There are only nine newspapers in print – none of them daily. These are all eight page tabloids published either weekly, twice or three times a week or irregularly. All are strong on opinion, weak on news – indeed there is hardly any hard news coverage in any of them. Circulations are small, ranging from 1,000 to 5,000. All are characterised by minuscule staff and face severe resource constraints.

Most papers adopted a partisan line during the election campaign, openly supporting parties of their choice both in editorials and comment-laden news reporting. But there was no co-ordinated effort amongst them to promote a particular party, so that the overall effect was to balance out each other. To the best of our knowledge, advertising in the newspapers was fair with standard rates offered to all parties.

In the past, the print media has had to face government and other pressures. During the period of polling in these elections, a journalist, Mr Paul Kamara, a member of the Cabinet, was shot and seriously injured.

On account of the weakness of the print media, it played a relatively insignificant role in these elections.

### The Broadcast Media

Given the high level of illiteracy in Sierra Leone, estimated at more than 80 per cent, and the poverty of the bulk of the population, radio is the communication medium of primary importance. It is relatively cheap, both to deliver and receive, and is accessible to people who cannot read.

Financial stringency, however, prompted the Sierra Leone Broadcasting Service (SLBS) management to make an extraordinary decision during the election campaign which was a source of concern to us. In a clear attempt to capitalise on the event, they arbitrarily increased the normal advertising rates on radio more than ten-fold for party political advertising. The rate for a 60-second prime-time spot was inflated from Le 1,200 to Le 16,000. The SLBS also presented the National Commission for Democracy with a bill for Le 1,600,000 for broadcasting four voter education programmes on radio and television, forcing the Commission to seek a grant from the British Government.

We questioned the SLBS management closely on whether these inflated rates were not prejudicing the less affluent political parties, and whether as a public service broadcaster, the SLBS should not make it easier for political parties and voter educators to communicate their messages to the electorate. The response was, "we have to make money to run our station". In

the event there was little election advertising on radio. The SLBS had priced themselves out of the market.

The SLBS's election coverage was more even-handed. Thirteen reporters were assigned to cover the campaign, with one assigned to each party on a rotation basis to avoid accusations of bias. This team prepared a nightly 40-minute radio programme. There was also a debate between the 13 presidential candidates, broadcast live on radio during the afternoon of 23 February and recorded for a television rebroadcast that night.

### **Conclusions**

The media's direct role in the 26 February elections was minimal. This weakness created an information vacuum in the country. This had a deleterious effect on the nature of political discourse in Sierra Leone.

In the absence of reliable information the country was rampant with rumour. Perceptions based on little or no hard evidence quickly became accepted as fact. The widespread popular assumption that the military was in league with the RUF rebels, and that both were intent on derailing the elections, may be attributable at least in part to this phenomenon.

If Sierra Leone's new democracy is to succeed, it must be given political content. Having emerged from their passivity under one-party rule and military dictatorship, the people of Sierra Leone need to direct their new assertiveness into a constructive discourse about the future of their country. For that they need a revitalised media through which a vigorous public debate can take place.

The reconstruction and development of the public broadcasting service, the establishment of a community radio network, the establishment of one or two good daily newspapers, and above all the training of journalists, should be regarded as priorities.

## Chapter 5

# The Campaign

The ban on party political activity was lifted in June 1995. However, the election campaign did not begin in earnest until the end of the year. As with much else in these elections, this too was largely due to the war. Where the security situation permitted, some of the parties, especially the major ones, took their campaigns to the provinces. Otherwise, campaigning was confined to the comparative security of the urban centres and the areas less affected by the war. This in effect meant the Western Area, the North and certain pockets in the South and the East.

This campaign was unlike those which preceded any of the earlier elections. The entire political class in Sierra Leone was agreed that it was the most peaceful campaign in the last 30 years. It was marked by evident cordiality between the contending politicians. Where in the past a political rival was generally perceived to be an enemy, this time he was a political adversary, someone with a different set of political perceptions and views. Political differences did not amount to antipathy.

This change in attitude was caused by the realisation among politicians that democracy, in the words of a National Council for Democracy poster, presupposes 'respect, tolerance and understanding' and the fact that most political leaders belong to the younger generation. Many of them have lived in democratic societies outside Sierra Leone and were keen to see democracy also take root in their own country.

We arrived in Freetown during the concluding stages of the campaign. We saw no rally in the capital but party vans were still driving up and down the streets blaring their messages. Party stalwarts in their respective colours added considerably to the electioneering atmosphere. Posters with photographs of party leaders were everywhere. Even so, we believe that due to the war, this was a muted campaign, restricted both in its reach and intensity.

*APPA ... Commonwealth Observer Group Chairman S K Singh and observers Lasham, Falana and Chikoko meet members of the All Political Parties Association. APPA brought together all but one of the parties contesting the elections*





*Campaigning ... continued to the last minute. It was generally good natured and peaceful: few believed that the parties were responsible for the four serious incidents which marred the campaign period when grenades were thrown at the INEC headquarters, the home of INEC Chairman James Jonah and the home of presidential candidate Ahmad Tejan Kabbah and another party leader, Thaimu Bangura, was beaten by men in uniform*

We should make mention, however, of the highly noticeable and very significant impact of the women's movement, especially in the run-up to the elections. They took to the street in a peaceful march in support of the elections and they were prominent at the Reconvened Session of the National Consultative Conference. Of the groups that came to meet us they were among the most articulate and clear in their objectives and quest for democracy.

#### **The All Political Parties Association (APPA)**

The co-operation among the political parties which did so much to make the campaign free of violence and intimidation was facilitated by the informal All Political Parties Association (APPA). It brought together all the registered political parties contesting the elections with the exception of the National Unity Party (NUP). Through this informal alliance, the political parties discussed all issues relating to the elections. It was chaired by Dr John Karefa-Smart, the most senior of all the presidential candidates and leader of the United National People's Party (UNPP). Through APPA the parties were able to agree on a *de facto* Code of Conduct for the elections and APPA served as the united voice of the parties in their dealings with the Government and INEC. APPA reflects the new spirit in Sierra Leonean politics. It has already done much to build a democratic culture and we hope that it will survive the strains and stresses of the post electoral period and become a permanent feature of the political scene in Sierra Leone.

We were told that the exclusion of the NUP from APPA had to do with a widespread perception that it was the Government's creation, or at least the favourite of the NPRC. It was alleged that the authorities allowed the NUP the chance of campaigning in areas where other parties were not allowed; that its supporters were misusing government facilities; and that Chiefs were being influenced to support the NUP. In general, the other parties thought that the Government ought to do much more to de-link itself from the NUP so as to ensure a 'level playing field'. These views were more strongly held in the days of Captain Strasser, but after his

overthrow in the middle of January 1996 the NUP was regarded with less suspicion. Indeed there was some rapprochement between it and the other political parties as the 'reconstituted' NPRC took steps to distance itself from the NUP. When we arrived in the country it seemed that many of the suspicions about the NUP's links with the Government had been largely eroded and the residual ones had lost their old strength. The NUP's support for elections on 26 February at the Reconvened Session of the National Consultative Conference on 12 February 1996 practically completed its reconciliation with the other political parties.

### **The Issues**

As far as issues were concerned there was little to distinguish the parties. All of them put the accent on ending the war but without any clear strategy beyond dialogue to achieve this end. All emphasised the importance of national unity and reconciliation as the basis of economic reconstruction. They were at one on the need to build a free market economy. Some talked in rather general terms about a national health service and free compulsory education and they all wanted an end to corruption, a free Press and accountable and transparent government.

The lack of any real public discourse on national issues is striking. The elections were fought mainly on the basis of personalities, not policies. Campaigning was devoid not only of any ideological content but even of any discussion of political issues. A majority of the parties offered no manifesto nor was there an extensive public debate on the country's many problems. The only issue discussed was the expression of hope, made by all parties and echoed by all branches of the media, that the elections would end the war and that democracy would bring better times. There was no political debate over how these things were to be achieved.

## Chapter 6

# The Poll and Count

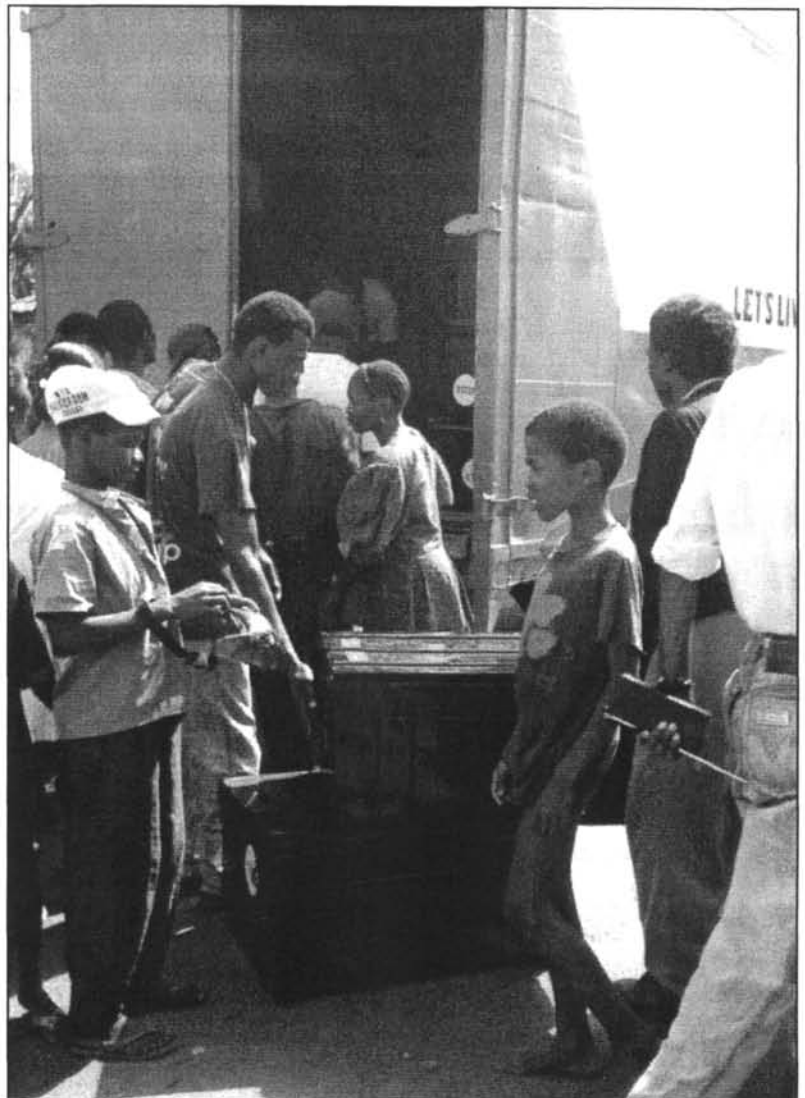
The polling stations were supposed to open for voting to commence at 7 a.m. on 26 February 1996. But only in a very few instances in the areas that we observed was this the case. In most stations voting did not begin before 9 a.m. and in some cases even much later. The delays had to do with INEC's logistical and resource problems. Where road transport could be used the necessary military escorts to provide security were often lacking. The military authorities argued that they needed all available men and material to provide security against rebel attacks. Then truck owners who had been contracted to transport election material refused to let their trucks move without military escort. In the cases where truck owners were prepared to allow the use of their vehicles they tended to demand extortionate sums from INEC. The grounding of the helicopters three days before polling day allegedly on the basis of security advice from the military added to the problems of transportation. But once the polling stations were opened, voting proceeded smoothly.

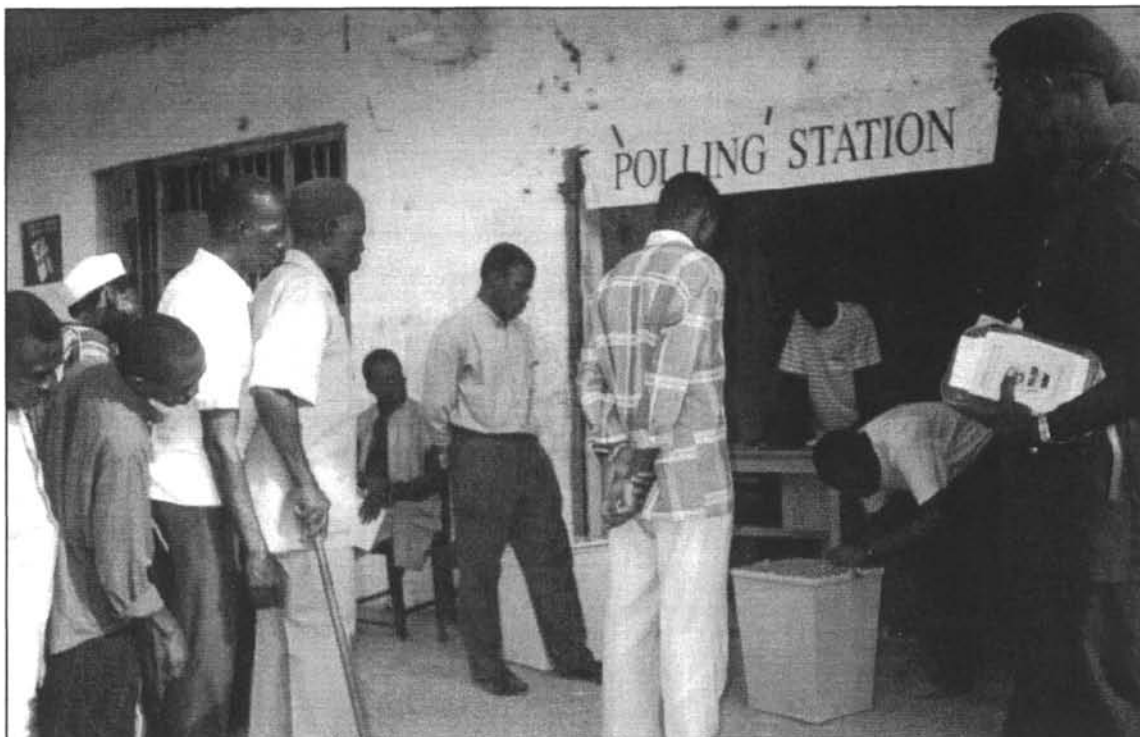
While the polling stations were late in opening, almost invariably the voters were early in arriving. Some voters told us that they had been in the queues from as early as 5.30 a.m. Many of them were to remain in the queues for the greater part of the day.

### Layout and Facilities

In the great majority of cases, the voting centres consisted of schools and other public buildings and the occasional private house. The layout was uneven. Some places were spacious and therefore allowed for a layout which facilitated the flow of voters. Others, especially those in the refugee camps, were usually cramped, greatly restricting the movement of voters. Some voting centres had no electricity and the lanterns which were provided were of little help when it came to counting the votes at the close of poll. Where there were particularly long queues, these added to the pressures on the available space. These difficulties notwithstanding the mood in the polling booths was one of good cheer and a determination not to allow any inconvenience to stand in the way of the elections.

*Logistics ... a removal van owned by Let's Live Transport is put to work delivering election kits. INEC had to overcome formidable logistical problems. Air transport was limited, road transport was hazardous and there were too few vehicles. On the eve of the election INEC's helicopter flights were stopped and some vehicles were withdrawn by their owners on security grounds*





*Sealed shut ... ballot boxes are sealed prior to the commencement of voting at a polling station in Koidu in Sierra Leone's Eastern Province. Separate ballot boxes and ballot papers were used for the Presidential and Parliamentary elections*

### **The Electoral Officials**

The Presiding Officers and polling assistants were mostly teachers. In many cases they had been recruited and trained a little late in the day and this showed in some of the initial errors which they made early on in polling. However, as the day wore on they quickly overcame these limitations. In their approach to their work, they displayed considerable industry and even greater patience. The great majority of the voters were illiterate and required considerable help to understand the procedures involved in voting. The Presiding Officers and polling assistants made it a point to explain carefully and in detail the method of voting, including even the way the ballot paper was to be folded. To avoid confusion as to which ballot paper was to go into which box, the polling officials first issued the Presidential and then the Parliamentary ballot paper.<sup>1</sup> In our observation, the polling officials were not only anxious to be doing the right thing, they were also anxious to be seen doing it. They followed the guidelines to the letter and in the process gained the confidence of the party agents. The punctiliousness of the polling officials meant that voting proceeded at a much slower pace; but they believed it was better to proceed at a slower pace and to deliver a credible election. So did we.

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<sup>1</sup> Voters first presented their voter registration document and, to prevent multiple voting, their hands were checked for traces of indelible ink. A small hole was punched in the voter registration document and the voter was issued with a ballot paper for the Presidential election. This was stamped and signed by the polling assistant and the voter marked the paper in the polling booth. After casting this ballot in the Presidential election ballot box the voter was issued with the ballot paper for the Parliamentary election, marked this in a second polling booth, deposited the paper in a second ballot box and had his or her index finger marked with indelible ink.



*Balloting in Bo ... an orderly queue at a polling station on the outskirts of Bo. Prior to the elections the political parties complained that voter education was inadequate. INEC agreed that it would have liked to have done more, blaming cuts to its planned programme on the slow response of the international community in providing funds for the elections*

*Peaceful Port Loko ... voters queue in peace at a polling station in Port Loko, Northern Province, as voting begins on 26 February. But nearby the presence of armed men had prompted local people to flee into the bush and forced INEC to abandon plans to establish a number of polling stations. There was shooting in some major centres, including the two biggest cities*





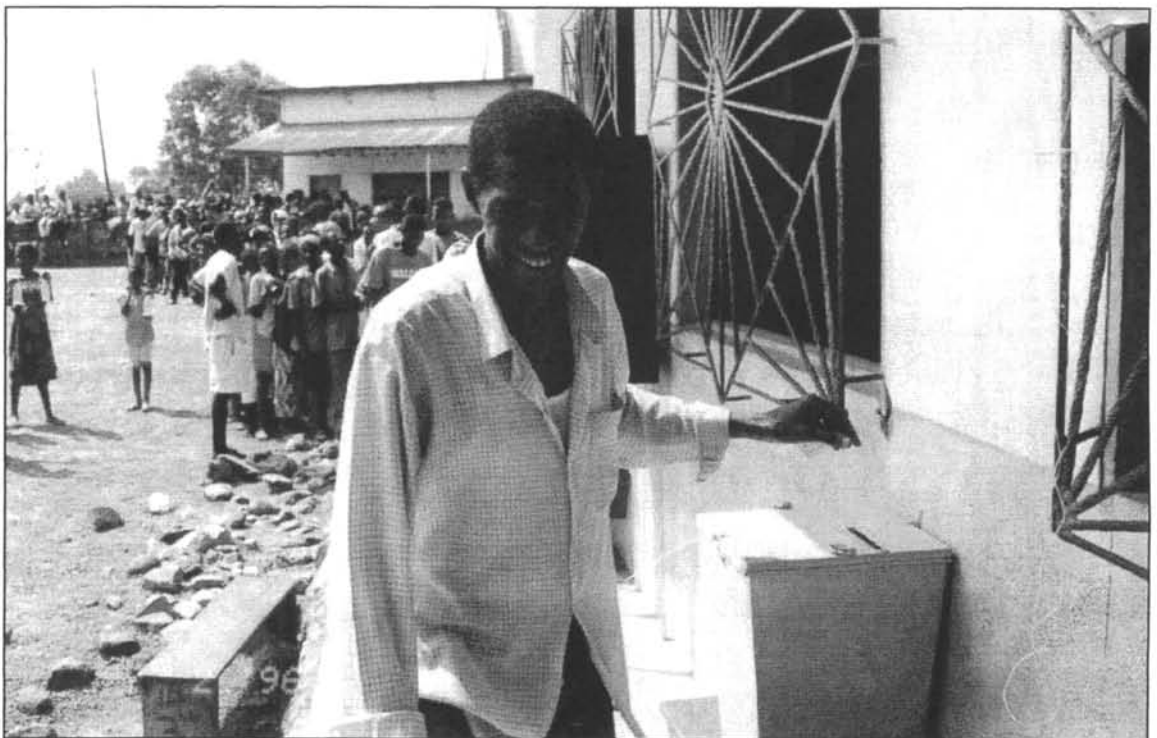
*Helping hand ... a senior citizen gets a helping hand from a young man in Bo. The Presidential and Parliamentary Elections were held simultaneously on 26 and 27 February, with a run-off for the post of President on 15 March 1996*

### Party Agents

Most political parties ensured that they had party agents at the polling stations. These were for the most part young men and women and brought to their task the enthusiasm and single mindedness typical of youth. It has been said that party representatives at polling stations are the front line of democracy. If that is true, the cause of democracy in Sierra Leone could not have been more vigilantly guarded. When shooting broke out in Bo, Kenema and parts of Freetown on polling day, it was usually the party agents, acting in mutual partnership, who put the higher national interest above their respective party allegiances and carried the ballot boxes to safety. Not only were they at the polling stations hours before the opening of the polls, some of them slept in the polling stations to ensure that the ballot boxes were not tampered with. Their role called for sacrifices, including going without meals for practically the whole day, a price they seemed ready to pay with equanimity.

The dedication of the polling officials and the party agents was matched by that of the voters. All the ranks were represented – the young, the middle aged and the old, all united in a common hope of a future of democracy and accountable governance and a common fear of arbitrary rule.

*Worth the wait ... after his long wait in the queue this voter in the Northern Province finally deposits his ballot paper in the ballot box. As here, many polling stations were in the open air*



For the young and even many of the middle aged this was their first experience of a free and democratic election. The lengths to which they went to ensure that they cast their vote is a measure of the value they placed on the opportunity. The resolution and courage of the voters where security risks were high compelled admiration. The ordinary men and women who voted are the true heroes of these elections.

### **Security Presence and Secrecy of the Ballot**

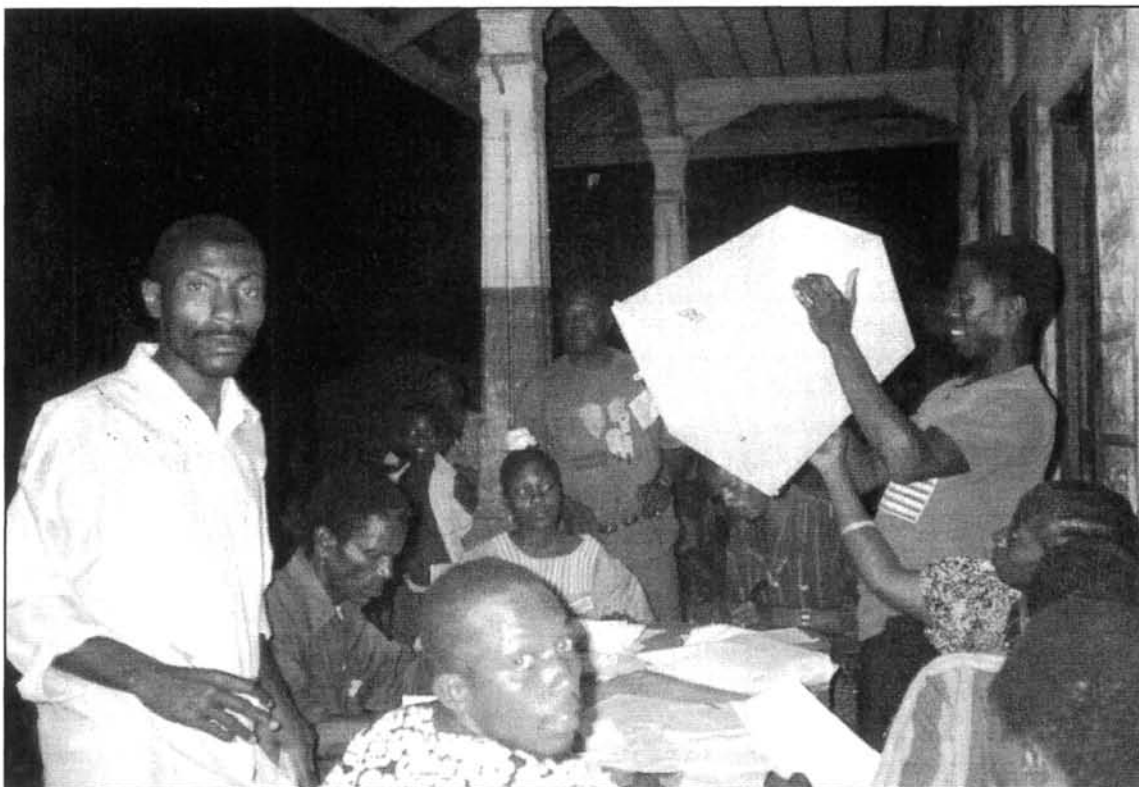
Security at the polling stations was in the hands of the police. Their presence was discreet but effective. They controlled the crowds with diligence and in a way which made for mutual confidence without which the elections would not have been as peaceful as they turned out to be.

The polling booths were arranged in a way to ensure maximum secrecy. They had been specially designed for the purpose and no voter to our knowledge complained of lack of secrecy. We received few reports of fraud and personation.

In Kenema and Makeni, RUF attacks on nearby villages sent large numbers of people into the towns, a massive influx which changed the whole election picture. In Kenema, the INEC Regional Commissioner and his team decided to allow the displaced persons to vote. This meant making provision for scores of additional polling stations at the last minute. It also meant that the registration list could no longer be used because it was not possible to apportion voters to specific polling stations and be assured of having the right registration list there. The electoral officers had to improvise and create new lists backed by appropriate identification by voters. Although this was not the prescribed method, we were satisfied that it did not impair the fairness of the elections. In the case of Bo the RUF carried the war into the heart of the town, drawing forth a spirited defence from the townspeople. They succeeded in beating off the attack (as they had done in the past) and returned to the queues to resume voting. We believe that nothing better demonstrates the dogged determination of the people of this country to achieve democracy.

*Security ... in some parts of Sierra Leone the police and military were augmented by 'kamajors', traditional security forces co-ordinated by paramount chiefs. Their presence appeared to be of considerable reassurance to voters, some of whom believed that the powers of these fighters included the ability to deflect bullets*





*Cleaned out ... an election official demonstrates to the watching crowd that all ballot papers have been removed from the box prior to counting. Counts were conducted at the polling stations themselves*

*Out in the open ... counting the votes. Throughout the country the count was conducted with commendable transparency, always in full view of party agents and often in the presence of large crowds of voters who could see for themselves that all was above board*



## The Count

The prevailing security situation made it practically impossible for some teams to observe the count in their respective areas. In the case of Bo the mid-day attack put an end to all observation. However, the teams that were able to observe the count did so. The process was slow, as again the electoral officials insisted in following the procedures meticulously. Each ballot paper was opened and shown to the assembled party agents for inspection. Inevitably this too slowed down the process but the care was necessary to assure all the interested parties that fair play was being done. It also enabled the party agents to record the tallies as an additional check on the count. Transparency was the watchword and the count concluded a process which was by and large a model of integrity.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Voting hours on the scheduled election day, Monday 26 February, were extended from 6.00 p.m. to 8.00 p.m. and then into the following day, Tuesday 27 February. Counting took place after the closure of the polls on both days.

## Conclusion

In our Interim Statement we said that no elections could have been held under more trying circumstances. The five-year old rebel war cast a long shadow over every aspect of the elections. It displaced half the population of Sierra Leone, driving some into refugee camps in neighbouring Guinea and Liberia and many others into the urban centres of the country. The resulting general insecurity meant that voter registration, civic education, party campaigns and other activities associated with the elections were confined for the most part to the relative safety of Freetown and the other urban centres of the country. This was a major limitation which the ongoing war imposed on the electoral exercise.

Even before the elections, the war had made road transport outside the Western Area unsafe, especially in the Eastern and Southern provinces. The determination of the rebel RUF to disrupt the elections made the transportation of voting materials by road even more difficult. The Interim National Electoral Commission had very few trucks of its own and relied on the use of air transport (helicopters and fixed wing aircraft) to transport voting kits to the various provincial centres. In the event, the helicopters were grounded on 23 February 1996 – three days before polling. When eventually they did resume flying, the voting materials arrived at their destinations late and in at least one verified instance, those meant for one area were sent to another. The logistical and organisational difficulties disrupted the elections for the 12 reserved seats for Paramount Chiefs which were to have been held on 24 February 1996 and accounted for the delays in the opening of many polling stations on 26 February.

INEC worked with commendable assiduity to deliver a credible election. But from the very beginning, the odds seemed to be against such an outcome. The prevailing circumstances in the country sometimes made it impracticable for INEC to achieve some of its objectives within the time-frame initially set. This was particularly evident in voter registration. Voter registration began shortly before Christmas 1995 and was scheduled to end on 31 January 1996. It was necessary, however, to extend the registration period, with the result that registration of voters continued till the eve of poll. And even then not every qualified voter was able to register. We encountered a number of people at the polling stations who wanted to know whether there was provision for them to register and vote there and then.

The odds in the way of the elections were compounded by the uncertainty arising from the campaign for 'peace before elections' launched in the middle of January 1996 and not ended until the National Consultative Conference reconvened on 12 February 1996 and decided overwhelmingly that the elections should be held on 26 February 1996 as planned. We believe that that campaign and the resulting uncertainty took away some of the momentum in the preparations for the elections.

Some have argued that a further three or four months would have placed INEC on an even better footing to conduct the elections. Perhaps, but that must now remain a matter for speculation. What is not for speculation is that complete INEC independence and greater resources would have been of immense assistance. A Chief Elections Officer would have helped to reduce some of the technical difficulties which beset the elections.

Consequently, these elections, under the given circumstances, were nothing short of an act of faith on the part of the people of Sierra Leone. They were the first truly democratic elections in nearly 30 years. For the citizen voters in the queues, these elections were more than an opportunity to replace a military regime with a democratically elected and accountable government. They saw them as an historic watershed, the one opportunity to make a new beginning; and judging by the impressive voter turnout, they intended to seize that opportunity with both hands.

The new beginning was already evident in the campaign. Previous elections in Sierra Leone had been characterised by widespread intimidation and violence, including the kidnapping and detention of political opponents. These Presidential and Parliamentary elections marked a decisive break with that past. The mood of the voters in the queues was

one of tolerance, good humour and enormous patience. We are convinced that all those registered voters wishing to exercise their franchise had an opportunity to do so free of manipulation.

The Presiding Officers and polling assistants worked assiduously to ensure transparency. They tended to follow the procedures and regulations to the letter. This inevitably slowed down the rate at which voters were being processed. The inexperience of some of the polling officers coupled with the need to explain the voting procedures to illiterate voters further slowed down progress in the polling stations. But what was lost in speed was made up for in the integrity and transparency of the process.

All in all, the people of Sierra Leone have risen to an historic challenge and carried the day for democracy. But it remains a fragile achievement. The rebel war has practically brought the economy of the country to a standstill. In many rural communities, especially in the Southern and Eastern provinces, the population is being subjected to extreme barbarities. If Sierra Leone's hard won democracy is to have a chance of putting down roots, the war must be brought to a speedy end. The Commonwealth, indeed, the entire international community must continue to do everything possible to end this tragedy.

The RUF consistently and publicly opposed the holding of the elections; but it was by no means the only group opposed to them. Other armed elements were similarly opposed to the transition and may well exploit every opportunity to destabilise and discredit the new democratic order. We believe the Commonwealth and the wider international community can play an important role in consolidating Sierra Leone's fledgling democracy. The institutions of democracy will need to be built up almost from scratch. The Commonwealth can help in this through technical assistance and by engaging the full range of Commonwealth institutions in support of democracy in Sierra Leone.

In the Commonwealth context, the outcome of these elections represents yet another triumph for one of its most cherished fundamental political values. The need now is for the Commonwealth to help the incoming democratically elected Government of Sierra Leone to make democracy a permanent reality in the country. We believe the Commonwealth must rise to this challenge.

# Acknowledgements

We wish to put on record our thanks to the many people who helped us during our mission and to express our particular thanks to the Chairman of the Interim National Electoral Commission (INEC), Dr James Jonah, and his colleagues, whose assistance was invaluable.

We also wish to express our appreciation to the political parties, religious bodies, non-governmental organisations, representatives of the media and members of the diplomatic corps in Freetown for their generosity with their time and attention, and to thank the other election observers – those belonging to the Joint International Observer Group, co-ordinated by the United Nations, and the domestic observers co-ordinated by the Council of Churches of Sierra Leone – for their co-operation.

Special thanks must go to the Commonwealth Secretary-General, Chief Emeka Anyaoku, for his guidance and for giving us this opportunity to serve the people of Sierra Leone and the cause of democracy. We would also like to thank the members of the Secretariat staff team for their efficiency and support in often very difficult circumstances.

Finally, and most of all, we wish to express our deep appreciation to the people of Sierra Leone for the warmth of their welcome and hospitality extended to us during our mission and to record our admiration for their dignity, courage and above all their remarkable determination to secure a democratic civilian government for their country.

# Supplement to Observer Group Report

## Presidential Election: Second Round, 15 March 1996

*The following report was prepared by the team of four Commonwealth Secretariat observers sent to Sierra Leone by the Secretary-General to observe the Second Round of the Presidential Election on 15 March 1996.*

### Background

None of the 13 presidential candidates who contested the election held on 26 and 27 February 1996 succeeded in securing the 55 per cent share of the vote required by law for an outright victory. The two most successful candidates – Alhaji Ahmad Tejan Kabbah of the Sierra Leone People's Party (SLPP) and Dr John Karefa-Smart of the United National People's Party (UNPP) – secured 35.7 per cent and 22.9 per cent respectively of the 748,846 votes cast in the ballot for President.

A second round of voting was therefore held on Friday 15 March 1996 between Mr Tejan Kabbah and Dr Karefa-Smart. Following requests from both the Head of State, Brigadier-General Julius Maada Bio, and the Chairman of the Interim National Electoral Commission, Dr James Jonah, the Commonwealth Secretary-General decided to send a Mission of four Secretariat officials to observe this second round. These officials, led by Dr Moses Anafu, had formed part of the staff support team for the Observer Group which had been present for the first round of the election in February.

### Deployment

We arrived in Freetown on Wednesday 13 March 1996 and were deployed the following day in two teams of two. One team covered the Western Area and was based in Freetown. The second was sent to Sierra Leone's second city, Bo, the capital of the Southern Province. Both teams liaised with INEC and the political parties and worked closely with members of the Joint International Observer Group (JIOG), co-ordinated by the United Nations, as well as with domestic observers fielded by the Council of Churches of Sierra Leone. We were able to observe the final day of campaigning, election day itself and the counting of votes.

Although it was again not possible for voting to take place in every part of the country more polling stations were established on this occasion. This time there were 2,200, compared with around 1,900 during the first round.

### The Campaign and the Media

The campaign was marked by three major political developments. First, talks between Mr Tejan Kabbah and Dr Karefa-Smart, which if successful might have resulted in a deal making the run-off unnecessary, broke down without agreement. Second, a number of political parties declared their support for the SLPP's Mr Tejan Kabbah. These included the People's Democratic Party (Sorbeh), the All People's Congress and the National Unity Party, the parties which were respectively placed third, fourth and fifth in the elections of 26-27 February 1996. Third, negative campaigning came to dominate much of the press coverage.

Party leaders had again toured the country prior to election day addressing sometimes large rallies. Loudspeaker vans were much in evidence. Although sometimes noisy and

boisterous the culmination of the campaign was peaceful. In Bo violence was feared on the evening before the election when a march of more than 2,000 supporters of Mr Tejan Kabbah converged at a crossroads in the centre of town near the UNPP office, outside which a crowd of about 100 supporters of Dr Karefa-Smart had gathered near a loudspeaker van. Observers were struck, however, by the good humour of the two sets of supporters. After some light-hearted banter the much larger group of Tejan Kabbah supporters danced away into town.

The print media devoted considerable space to the election, reproducing biographies of and interviews with the candidates and reporting on the charges and rebuttals made by their supporters. The Sierra Leone Broadcasting Service (SLBS) attempted in vain to arrange a debate between the candidates but was able to produce several editions of their special election programmes *Elections Watch* (television) and *Elections Update* (radio). These programmes featured recorded interviews with the presidential candidates, coverage of important statements and film of the campaign. SLBS was eager to point out, however, that it did not indulge in mudslinging and smear campaigns of the sort featured in the print media. Its Code of Conduct, developed in co-operation with INEC, stated categorically that it should not involve itself in personal attacks and character assassination.

SLBS reporters were again attached to the two campaigns. On election day itself SLBS organised a special phone-in programme which featured calls from members of the public and reports from SLBS correspondents in Freetown, Bo, Kenema, Makeni and Port Loko. Election day coverage also featured an interview with INEC Chairman Dr Jonah, whose announcement of the result on Sunday 17 March was carried live by SLBS radio, which can be heard throughout the country.

SLBS had editorial control of its special election programmes. However, from 11 March the influence of the Government over the content of radio news bulletins was increased: scripts for incorporation into the radio news bulletins were prepared directly by the Government Information Service.

### **The Supplementary Register**

Election day itself began with controversy. The NPRC Government had decided that those voters who had registered during the five-day supplementary registration period, from 19 to 23 February, could not vote in the second round, even though many of them had voted in the first.

INEC said in a press release on 14 March, the day before the second round election day, that 'the ground for this prohibition appears to be that the supplement was not presented to the NPRC by INEC twenty-four hours before polling began on the 26 February 1996, as required by Decree No.3 of 1996.' INEC explained that it had told the Government that it would not be possible to comply and that the political parties had agreed that the Decree required the Commission 'to do the impossible'. Early in March it had offered to present the supplementary list to the NPRC before the second round. However, it had been informed by telephone on the afternoon of 14 March that this was unacceptable. INEC appealed to all electors on the supplementary register 'not to present themselves at the polling stations as this may cause some confusion'.

However, electors did not hear or did not heed the warning. Early on election day we witnessed angry scenes at polling stations in Freetown as voters who had believed that they were entitled to vote protested to Presiding Officers. A large crowd formed outside the INEC Headquarters and there was some tension. INEC Chairman Dr Jonah, who estimated that the decision affected more than 90,000 voters, said that he was unhappy with the decision but made clear that INEC had no alternative but to comply with the government ruling. The two presidential candidates themselves together addressed crowds of their supporters in Freetown and appealed for calm. Eventually, the tension was defused, although many people believed that they had been 'cheated' of their right to vote.

## Security

Security proved to be less of a problem than had been feared and the second round went ahead without violence or intimidation. During the first round of voting in February armed men had launched attacks in Freetown, Bo and Kenema and there had been fighting near other major provincial centres. Elsewhere the presence of armed men had prompted local people to flee into the bush and forced INEC to abandon plans to establish a number of polling stations. Prior to the second round of voting there had been rebel attacks near Bo and predictions of worse to come, including attacks on both Freetown and Bo on election day.

In the event, however, there were no attacks in the main cities and relatively little disruption of INEC's plans elsewhere. Indeed, polling stations were set up in a number of places which had been judged to be too insecure three weeks before – for instance, in parts of the Southern Province. Registration had taken place in 14 of the chiefdoms in the Southern Province but in the first round it had been possible to hold elections only in four of these. This time voting was due to take place in seven. We were told of only two places where security fears had led to the abandonment of or delay in implementing INEC plans for the establishment of polling stations.

Security at polling stations was again provided by police officers. Soldiers were deployed mainly outside the principal towns, to deter attacks by rebels. Liaison between INEC and the security forces appeared to be good and police and army units provided protection and transport for the delivery and collection of election equipment and materials. In some places, such as Bo, security was enhanced by the presence of *kamajors*, traditional security forces co-ordinated by local Paramount Chiefs and based on local hunting societies.

As in the first round, security at polling stations was generally discreet. Although as many as 12 *kamajors* were seen at one polling station in Bo, armed with machetes and rifles, their presence did not appear to arouse concern on the part of voters. In our experience, police officers were diligent and courteous and both the unarmed police and their armed colleagues in the paramilitary Special Security Division (SSD) clearly instilled confidence in and were trusted by the voters. Fears that elements in the armed forces might disrupt the election were not realised, indeed the conduct of the military was praised by INEC Chairman Dr Jonah and contributed to dispelling the considerable suspicion of the army which had been widely evident at the time of the first round.

## The Conduct of the Poll

Voting was scheduled to begin at 7.00 a.m. and to conclude either at 6.00 p.m. or whenever all those in the queue at that time had voted. As in the first round, there was no voting in the refugee camps in Liberia and Guinea because the people there had been unable to register.

INEC was again confronted by serious logistical difficulties and the opening of some polling stations was delayed, in some cases because registers were initially unavailable. Some polling stations ran out of ballot papers in the afternoon and voters had to be sent to other polling stations to cast their ballots or voting had to be suspended while additional books of ballot papers were delivered. Generally, however, Presiding Officers reported that they had adequate supplies of materials and staff.

New ballot papers had been prepared for the second round, bearing the names of the two candidates, their parties and their party symbols. On arrival at the polling station voters' hands were checked for traces of indelible ink. They were issued with ballot papers, to be marked either with a pencil or thumbprint in polling booths which were well screened to provide for secrecy. The voter then deposited the ballot paper in the ballot box and his or her index finger was marked with indelible ink.

The conduct of the poll was again generally orderly and relatively efficient. Although queues at polling stations were sometimes long at the beginning of the day the majority of voters appeared to have cast their ballots by early afternoon, by which time many polling stations had no queues at all. Most electors appeared to understand the process and the layout of polling stations was good, although space was sometimes insufficient. Although we

did observe lapses by Presiding Officers and polling assistants they generally coped well and were helpful to old and disabled voters and to the minority of voters who were confused about the process.

We saw no evidence of systematic fraud or organised attempts to undermine the process. We were told of six cases of attempted multiple voting but no cases of personation. However, several Presiding Officers reported to us that they had had to turn away persons who were under 18 and on a number of occasions we were present when attempts at under age voting were made.

Relations between the parties were generally cordial and party agents appeared to co-operate well with election officials at polling station level. Almost all party agents told us that they were happy with the conduct of Presiding Officers and polling assistants and most expressed satisfaction with arrangements. However, while the agents may have had no complaints this was not the case with others in their parties, including some senior officials. There were some angry scenes in Bo when supporters of one party objected to the rulings of Presiding Officers on procedure, requiring the intervention of the police on at least two occasions, and protests were made to INEC.

Following the first round of voting in February there had been protests from three political parties that the indelible ink used at the end of the voting process was not sufficiently indelible. It was claimed that the ink could be washed off in less than the 72 hours claimed by the manufacturers. On this occasion, when a different coloured ink was used at most polling stations, no such protests were reported to us.

### **The Use of the Register**

The major problem on election day, which we understand led to adjustments to the voting figures by INEC later, concerned the use of the register at polling stations. INEC had made clear in advance that voters' names had to be on and would be checked against the register and that for this round of elections voters should cast their ballots only where they were registered. Before being given a ballot paper the voter would be required to produce his or her voter registration document or, failing this, another form of identification such as an identity card or a driver's licence.

However, while some Presiding Officers implemented this procedure strictly, others did not. At some polling stations only those whose names were on that station's register and who were in possession of a voter registration document or other acceptable ID were allowed to vote there. At others those not on the register were allowed to vote provided that the Presiding Officer was satisfied that they were eligible, in which case a note was taken of their name, address and age. Where voter registration documents were presented the numbers were noted, although many voters appeared to have lost or mislaid their documents since the first round.

Departure from the practice prescribed by INEC in advance on the part of some Presiding Officers and the variation in practice which resulted was unfortunate. However, we believe that the Presiding Officers acted in good faith in an effort to ensure that voters were not disenfranchised, to process voters as fast as possible and because they believed that the procedures used would be acceptable. We do not believe that there was any systematic exploitation of the variation in practice on the part of the political parties or organised groups of voters. However, we believe that this aspect of the second round of voting should be examined by INEC so that appropriate improvements can be made for future elections.

This matter highlighted two shortcomings in INEC's organisation. First, the training given to Presiding Officers prior to the second round was clearly not always adequate. Had it been there should have been no variation in practice of the sort described above. Second, INEC's capacity to ensure uniform application of the prescribed procedures was deficient.

The problems referred to should have been prevented by or detected and then corrected by INEC co-ordinators, part of whose role was to ensure that procedures were implemented properly. Further, we noted that even when efforts were made to ensure uniform practice by means of radio announcements by senior INEC officials the guidance given was sometimes at

variance to that provided to Presiding Officers by INEC officials on the ground. Liaison between the most senior INEC officials and their juniors was not always as close as it might, or should, have been.

### The Count

We were present for the counting of votes in both Freetown and Bo. As in the first round this took place at the polling stations themselves. After closing their polling stations Presiding Officers noted the number of unused ballot papers, removed the seals from the ballot box in the presence and full view of party agents and other observers, emptied the box and noted the total number of ballots cast. The ballots were allocated to two piles, one for each candidate, with each ballot paper displayed to the crowd, agents and observers and an announcement of the name of the candidate for whom the vote had been cast. The two piles of ballot papers were then counted, with each paper again displayed to the crowd. At the end of the count Presiding Officers informed those present of the result, which was then communicated to the INEC provincial headquarters.

The procedure was commendably transparent and, at least where our Observers were present, the conduct of the count was scrupulous.

### Turnout and Result

When the results were compiled in Freetown it emerged that the turnout had been higher than expected in the Southern, Eastern and Northern Provinces, no doubt because of the improved security situation which had allowed for polling stations to be established outside the main towns and encouraged voters to vote. The lower than expected turnout in the Western Area was attributed to the Government's decision that those on the supplementary register should not be allowed to vote.

Complaints were made to INEC by Dr Karefa-Smart who later told the BBC that "before the election results were announced we set out some very serious violations of the law and the Constitution" and that his party had "significant doubts as to the election results". He believed that he would have won if he had gone to court, but in the national interest he had decided "to overlook all of these violations".

The result was announced by Dr Jonah shortly after 9.00 p.m. on Sunday 17 March. Following a protest from Dr Karefa-Smart and a recount in Kenema and Bo 70,000 votes were deducted from the total for Mr Tejan Kabbah. With the addition later of results from two polling stations which had not been received at the time of the announcement the final result was:

Candidate	Total Votes	National %
Ahmad Tejan Kabbah	609,525	59.24%
John Karefa-Smart	419,326	40.76%
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,028,851</b>	<b>100%</b>

Mr Tejan Kabbah won the Southern Province (209,462 votes to 18,831), Eastern Province (232,084 to 26,984) and the Western Area (84,635 to 72,397), while Dr Karefa-Smart won the Northern Province (301,114 to 83,344). A total of 15,802 ballots were declared rejected or spoilt.


### Conclusion

INEC and its Chairman should again be commended for the way in which they met the many organisational and other challenges with which they were confronted. But the biggest tribute should go to the people of Sierra Leone who again impressed us all with their determination to exercise their right to vote.

There were undoubtedly shortcomings during the second round of voting, as there had been in the first round in February. However, there was free political activity during the campaign prior to the poll. The media were able to report the campaign and to reflect the views of both candidates and their supporters. The rebels of the RUF did not manage to disrupt either the campaign or the election itself and the security forces conducted themselves properly and enabled more polling stations to be established than in the first round. More than one million people voted. They were assisted by diligent and efficient election officials. The secrecy of the ballot was assured. The process was transparent, orderly and free from intimidation. The parties behaved responsibly. There was no evidence of any organised abuse – indeed, on the contrary, there was good faith all round.

On the basis of the observations we were able to make and taking all the circumstances into account, the election was credible, arrangements were such as to enable the will of the people to be expressed and the result reflected their wishes.


**Ballot Paper: Presidential Election, Second Round**







## REPUBLIC OF SIERRA LEONE

### PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION

#### 1996



Party Name	Candidate's Name	Party Initials	Party Symbol	Candidate's Photo	Voter's Mark
Sierra Leone People's Party	Ahmad Tejan Kabbah	S.L.P.P.			
United National Peoples Party	John Karefa-Smart	U.N.P.P.			

# **Annexes**

## ANNEX I

### Composition of the Commonwealth Observer Group

***Mr S K Singh (India – Chairman)***

Mr S K Singh has had a long and distinguished career in the Indian Foreign Service. He served as Ambassador in Lebanon, Jordan, Cyprus, Afghanistan, Austria and Pakistan. He was India's Permanent Representative to the UN in Vienna and also Governor for India on the Board of Governors of the International Atomic Energy Agency from 1982-85. He ended his diplomatic career as Foreign Secretary in 1990. For two years afterwards, he was Visiting Professor of International Affairs at the Jawaharlal Nehru University in Delhi. He was a member of the Commonwealth Observer Groups which observed the elections in Kenya in December 1992, Lesotho in March 1993 and South Africa in April 1994.

***Mrs Georgina Chikoko (Malawi)***

Mrs Georgina Chikoko is Electoral Commissioner in the Malawi Electoral Commission and has considerable experience in electoral work. She served as Technical Resource Officer in the Local Government Elections in South Africa in November 1995. She is currently serving as Provincial Resource Officer for the Local Government Elections in the KwaZulu-Natal Province, which will take place in May 1996.

***The Hon Jarso Jillo Falana, MP (Kenya)***

The Hon Jarso Jillo Falana is a Member of Parliament and Deputy Chief Whip in the Parliament of Kenya and has already served two terms in Parliament. He was awarded the Order of the Grand Warrior (OGW) of Kenya in 1994 for outstanding public service.

***The Hon Terrence Gillette, MP (Jamaica)***

The Hon Terrence Gillette has been a Member of Parliament in Jamaica since 1976. He has been a Minister of State in the Ministry of Agriculture and Mining since 1989 and is also Deputy Leader of Government Business and Chief Government Whip. He served as Jamaica representative in the ACP/EEC from 1990-94.

***The Hon Rauff Hakeem, MP (Sri Lanka)***

The Hon Rauff Hakeem is by profession an attorney-at-law/solicitor and has appeared before the original and Appellate Courts since 1984. He was elected to Parliament in 1994 as a member of the Sri Lanka Muslim Congress, and is Deputy Chairman of Committees within the Assembly. He is also a member of the Parliamentary Select Committee on Constitutional Reform. He was a permanent delegate representing the Sri Lanka Muslim Congress to the All Party Conference (1990-92) and is currently General Secretary of the Party. He has participated in national and international conferences on human rights and published several articles on constitutional and legal reform. He was a member of the Commonwealth Election Observer Mission to Tanzania in 1995.

***Mr David Adeenze-Kangah (Ghana)***

Mr David Adeenze-Kangah is Deputy Chairman of the Electoral Commission in Ghana. He has considerable experience in electoral work and participated in a Commonwealth election management course in Namibia in 1995. He was an election observer in South Africa's first democratic elections in April 1994 and in Tanzania in October 1995.

***Mr Charles Edward Lasham (Britain)***

Mr Charles Lasham is Chief Electoral Officer for the City of Liverpool and has statutory responsibility for the production of the electoral register for the city and the conduct of all elections held within the city. He has considerable experience in electoral work and has undertaken election assessments in several countries including Namibia, Seychelles and Tanzania. He has published various articles on electoral matters and participated in international seminars in many countries. He is a founder member of the Association of Electoral Administrators and was Chairman of the Association between 1990-92. He was an observer of the elections in Tanzania in 1995.

***Mr William H Montgomery (Canada)***

Mr William Montgomery is a diplomat and served in the Foreign Service of Canada from 1961-64, with postings to India, Thailand, Indonesia, Britain and the UN in Switzerland. He served as Canada's Ambassador to Indonesia from 1979-83 and as Commonwealth Assistant Secretary-General from 1987-93. Since 1994 he has been serving as Director of Pearson International Institute, Dalhousie University, Halifax, Canada.

***The Hon Kiraitu Murungi, MP (Kenya)***

The Hon Kiraitu Murungi is a Member of Parliament in Kenya. He is a lawyer and has appeared in both the High Court and the Court of Appeal of Kenya. He served as Secretary of the Kenya Section of the International Commission of Jurists and as Consultant to the Kenya Catholic Justice and Peace Commission from 1989-90. He also served as Consultant and Legal Adviser to the African Network for Prevention and Protection against Child Abuse and Neglect. He was a member of the Committee of African Legal Experts which drafted the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child and has served as Secretary for Human Rights and Democratisation for FORD-Kenya. He is currently Chairman of the Centre for Governance and Development in Kenya.

***Mr Cecil Pilgrim (Guyana)***

Mr Cecil Pilgrim was High Commissioner of Guyana to Britain from 1986-93 and, concurrently, Ambassador to France, The Netherlands, Yugoslavia and Unesco. During this time he sat on the Boards of several Commonwealth organisations including the Commonwealth Institute, the Commonwealth Foundation and the Commonwealth Fund for Technical Co-operation. He was also the Guyana representative on the International Maritime Organisation and the International Sugar Organisation. He began his career in the Foreign Service in 1967 and served in Jamaica, China, the former Soviet Union and Cuba where he was Dean of the Diplomatic Corps. He was a member of the Commonwealth Observer Group for the elections in South Africa in 1994.

***HE Tuiloma Neroni Slade (Western Samoa)***

Ambassador Neroni Slade was formerly Attorney-General and is now Western Samoa's Permanent Representative to the United Nations and concurrently Ambassador to the US and High Commissioner to Canada. He has served in both UN and Commonwealth Observer Missions, to the former Trust Territory of Palau in 1994, to Seychelles in 1992 and to Malaysia in 1990.

***Mr Allister Sparks (South Africa)***

Mr Allister Sparks is a distinguished journalist and has received several honours for his work. In 1985 he was honoured with a special international award for outstanding reporting on apartheid presented by Inter-Press Service. The award was part of the fortieth anniversary

celebrations of the United Nations in New York. He has lectured widely on South African affairs and media issues in many countries. He is the second South African journalist to be published in the prestigious American magazine, *The New Yorker*. An expanded version of his article on events leading to South Africa's transition to democracy has been published as a book under the title *Tomorrow is Another Country*.

#### **SECRETARIAT SUPPORT STAFF**

Dr Moses Anafu, Team Leader

Mr Christopher Child, Assistant to Observers

Dr Lucy Steward, Assistant to Observers

Mr Gregor MacKinnon, Assistant to Observers

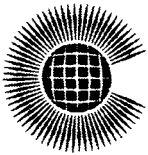
Mr Navin Kumar, Assistant to Observers

Mr Prakash Ramgulam, Administrative Officer

Miss Cheryl Rebeiro, Secretary

**ANNEX II**

Press Release of 16 February 1996

**Commonwealth  
News Release**

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96/6

16 February 1996

**COMMONWEALTH TO OBSERVE PRESIDENTIAL  
AND PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS IN SIERRA LEONE**

A team of 12 Commonwealth observers will leave for Sierra Leone on Saturday 17 February 1996 to observe the Presidential and Parliamentary Elections due to take place on 26 February 1996. In making the announcement today, the Commonwealth Secretary-General, Chief Emeka Anyaoku, said:

"At the request of the Government of Sierra Leone, supported by all the political parties contesting the elections, I am sending a Commonwealth Observer Group to observe the Presidential and Parliamentary Elections which are to be held there on 26 February 1996. The overwhelming decision of the National Consultative Conference last Monday, 12 February 1996, to proceed with the elections as planned, is a ringing affirmation of the faith of the people of Sierra Leone in the democratic process, and has been endorsed by the Head of State, Brigadier Julius Maada Bio. This courageous decision has the support of the entire Commonwealth and has been reflected in the assistance which the Commonwealth has provided throughout the electoral process. The Observer Group will make a further important Commonwealth contribution towards entrenching democracy and assisting the search for lasting peace in the country."

The Commonwealth Observer Group for Sierra Leone will be led by **Mr S K Singh**, a distinguished retired diplomat from India. The other members of the Group are:

**Mrs Georgina Chikoko**  
Electoral Commissioner, Malawi

**Hon Jarso Jillo Falana**  
Member of Parliament, Kenya

.....2/-

2

**Hon Terrence Gillette**  
Member of Parliament, Jamaica

**Hon Rauff Hakeem**  
Member of Parliament, Sri Lanka

**Mr David Kangah**  
Deputy Chairman of the National Electoral Commission, Ghana

**Mr Charles Lasham**  
Chief Electoral Officer, Britain

**Mr William Montgomery**  
Director, Lester Pearson Institute, Dalhousie University, Canada

**Hon Kiraitu Murungi**  
Member of Parliament, Kenya

**Mr Cecil Pilgrim**  
Former Diplomat, Guyana

**HE Tuiloma Neroni Slade**  
Ambassador and Permanent Representative to the  
United Nations, Western Samoa

**Mr Allister Sparks**  
Journalist, South Africa

The Group will be supported by a six-member team from the Commonwealth Secretariat led by Dr Moses Anafu, Assistant Director in the Political Affairs Division.

***Note to Editors:***

*This will be the 17th Commonwealth team to observe national elections in a member state since October 1990. During this period Commonwealth observers have been present in Malaysia, Bangladesh, Zambia, Seychelles (three times), Guyana, Ghana, Kenya, Lesotho, Pakistan, South Africa, Malawi, Namibia, St Kitts and Nevis, and Tanzania. These observer missions follow a decision taken in 1991 by Commonwealth Heads of Government to support the promotion of democracy in member states.*

**ANNEX III****Arrival Statement of 17 February 1996**

Sierra Leone Presidential and Parliamentary Elections, 1996

**Commonwealth Observer Group***News Release***ARRIVAL STATEMENT BY THE COMMONWEALTH OBSERVER GROUP**

We have come to Sierra Leone at the request of the Commonwealth Secretary-General, Chief Emeka Anyaoku, to observe the Presidential and Parliamentary Elections to be held on 26 February 1996. This follows an invitation from the Government and a visit by a Commonwealth Secretariat Planning Mission during which the political parties involved in the election confirmed that they welcome our presence here.

We come from many parts of the Commonwealth. As Observers, we will serve in our personal capacities and not as representatives of our respective governments or organisations to which we may belong. We have no executive role. Our broad objective is to observe the organisation and conduct of the elections in accordance with the laws of Sierra Leone and form an independent and impartial judgment of the credibility of the process. We will be based in different parts of the country both before and on the polling day and we will meet the contending political parties and others. We will naturally remain in close touch with the Interim National Electoral Commission (INEC). At the end of our mission, we will present a report to the Commonwealth Secretary-General, who will make it available to the Government of Sierra Leone, to the political parties taking part in the elections and, thereafter, to all Commonwealth governments.

We look forward to our mission and feel honoured to be here for these important elections which we hope will mark Sierra Leone's transition to a multi-party democracy. Further, we hope that all Sierra Leoneans will join hands to make these elections proceed peacefully and successfully.

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**Note to Editors**

The Commonwealth Observer Group to Sierra Leone has established an office at the Cape Sierra Hotel, Aberdeen, Freetown. For further information, please contact telephone: 272480: fax: 272431.

17 February 1996

**ANNEX IV****Schedule of Engagements****Sunday 18 February**

- 1930 Dinner hosted by Chairman in honour of Dr James Jonah, Chairman of Interim National Electoral Commission (INEC)  
*Venue: Lagoonda Complex, Freetown*

**Monday 19 February**

- 0900 Briefing by officials of INEC: Mr Koroma (Assistant to the Executive Secretary), Mr Sam Graham (Legal Adviser), Mrs Regina Coomber (Registration Consultant) and Ms Kate Birsell (Voter Education)
- 1100 Briefing by Mr J A Bangali, Permanent Secretary, Department of Internal Affairs, on the elections for the seats reserved for Paramount Chiefs
- 1130 Special Envoy of the UN Secretary-General: Ambassador Berhanu Dinka
- 1430 British High Commissioner: HE Mr Ian McCluney
- 1545 Ghana High Commissioner: HE Brigadier Twumasi
- 1700 National Commission for Democracy: Dr Kadi Sesay (Chairwoman)
- 1730 Sierra Leone Broadcasting Service: Mr Babatunde Roland May (Director-General), Mrs Gina Banda (Deputy Director), Mr Tommy Tucker (Deputy Head of Programmes TV) and Mr Joshua Nicol (Special Assistant to the Director-General)
- 1930 Chairman's Reception for Observers and Invited Guests  
*Venue: Terrace, Lagoonda Complex, Freetown*

**Tuesday 20 February**

- 0930 United National People's Party: Dr John Karefa-Smart, Leader and Presidential candidate, and Mr Frank Karefa-Smart
- 1030 Social Democratic Party: Mr Sylvester B Navo (Secretary-General) and Mr Paul Ngobeh
- 1115 Sierra Leone People's Party: Dr Prince Harding (Secretary-General) and Mr George Banda-Thomas (Legal Adviser)
- 1415 National Unity Party: Dr Richard Latiff (Public Relations Officer) and Mr M Momoh

- 1500 People's Democratic Party (Sorbeh): Mr Ibrahim Njai (Director of Research and National Campaign Manager) and Mr Osman Kamara (Secretary-General)
- 1600 People's National Convention: Mr Saidu Turay (National Publicity Secretary) and Mr Bassiru Savage (Assistant National Organising Secretary)
- 1730 National Unity Movement: Mr Reginald Schlenker-Williams (Secretary of Human Rights Committee and Spokesperson)

### **Wednesday 21 February**

- 0930 Democratic Centre Party: Dr Stevens, Vice-Presidential candidate and Deputy Leader
- 1030 National Alliance Democratic Party: Dr Anthony A Sandi (Executive Member)
- 1115 People's Progressive Party: Mr Junisa Sesay (Assistant National Organising Secretary) and Mr A B S Kamara (Finance Officer)
- 1200 Sierra Leone Bar Association: Ms Hannah Ahmed (President)
- 1245 United Nations: Mr Gerald Ganz (Security Officer) and Ms Stefanie Luthy (Co-ordinator, Joint International Observer Group)
- 1500 Muslim Congress and the Supreme Islam Council: Alhaji K Swarray and Alhaji Mohammed Kamara
- 1530 Council of Churches of Sierra Leone: Rev Amadu Kamara (Secretary-General)
- 1645 US Ambassador: HE Mr John Hirsch
- 1715 Women's organisations: Ms Zainab Bangura (Women's Forum) and representatives of the Women's Movement for Peace
- 1745 Deployment briefing and distribution of Observers' material

**ANNEX V****Deployment of Commonwealth Observers**

<b>PROVINCE</b>		<b>LOCATION</b>
<b>Western Area</b>	Mr S K Singh (Chairman) Mr William Montgomery Dr Moses Anafu Mr Navin Kumar	Cape Sierra Hotel Freetown
<b>Southern Province</b>	Mr Charles Lasham Hon Jarso Jillo Falana MP Mrs Georgina Chikoko Mr Prakash Ramgulam	Sir Milton Hotel Bo
<b>Eastern Province</b>	Hon Terrence Gillette MP Mr Allister Sparks  Mr David Adeenze-Kangah Mr Gregor MacKinnon	National Pastoral Centre Kenema  Private accommodation Sefadu
<b>Northern Province</b>	Hon Rauff Hakeem MP Dr Lucy Steward  Hon Kiraitu Murungi MP Mr Christopher Child  Mr Cecil Pilgrim HE Tuiloma Neroni Slade	Wesleyan Mission Makeni  Teachers' College Port Loko  FAO Guest House Kabala

## ANNEX VI

## Check List for Polling Station Visits and Observation Notes for Poll and Count



Sierra Leone Presidential and Parliamentary Elections, 1996

## Commonwealth Observer Group

Tel: (232) 22 272 480  
 (232) 22 272 267  
 Fax: (232) 22 272 431/227

Cape Sierra Hotel  
 Chalet No. 24  
 Aberdeen, Freetown

### CHECKLIST FOR POLLING STATION VISITS

Name of Observer(s): .....

District/Province: .....

Polling Station: .....

Time of Arrival: .....

Voters in Queue: ..... Rate of Processing: .....

- 
1. **Opening of Poll:** On time?      Procedures followed?  
    No/Yes                      No/Yes  
    Details:
  2. **Layout and Facilities:**                      Good? Adequate? Poor?
  3. **Polling Staff:**                      Efficient? Satisfactory? Poor?
  4. **Security Presence:** Discreet? Intrusive? Oppressive?
  5. **Complaints by Party**  
**Polling Agents:**      No/Yes      Details:
  6. **Complaints by Voters:**                      No/Yes      Details:
  7. **Mood at Station?** Orderly? Tense? Chaotic?
  8. **Secrecy of Ballot:** Assured? Poor? Uncertain

**9. Voting:**

(a) Personation attempts alleged: No/Yes

Details:

(b) Multiple voting attempts alleged: No/Yes

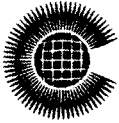
Details:

10. **Closing of Poll:** On time? Numbers still in queue?  
Procedure followed? No/Yes

11. **The Count:** Are procedures being observed? No/Yes

12. **Apparent fairness overall:** Good? Acceptable?  
Questionable?

13. **Other Comments:**



Sierra Leone Presidential and Parliamentary Elections, 1996

## Commonwealth Observer Group

Tel: (232) 22 272 480  
(232) 22 272 267  
Fax: (232) 22 272 431/227

Cape Sierra Hotel  
Chalet No. 24  
Aberdeen, Freetown

### OBSERVATION NOTES FOR POLL AND COUNT

#### PART A

The Observers may focus particular attention on the following aspects of the conduct of the election:

#### THE CAMPAIGN

1. The extent of access to television and, especially, radio available to all parties.
2. The arrangements for the allocation of time for political broadcasts and advertisements on radio and television.
3. The extent of access enjoyed by the political parties to the print media.
4. The tone and content of political broadcasts, advertisements and posters put out by the political parties.
5. The conduct of political meetings.
6. The conduct of house-to-house canvassing of voters.
7. The voter education programme on radio and television conducted by the Interim National Electoral Commission, the National Commission for Democracy and others.
8. Permits for public meetings.
9. Access to printing facilities.
10. Access to funds and sources of funds.
11. Expenditure limits.

### THE POLL

1. The location of polling stations.
2. Distances travelled by voters to polling stations, particularly in rural areas.
3. The length of time voters wait to cast their votes.
4. The steps taken to ensure that the secrecy of the ballot is assured.
5. The performance of electoral officials at the polling stations visited.
6. The procedure followed at the opening of the poll.
7. The adequacy or otherwise of facilities at polling stations and their state of readiness.
8. The procedures in place to ensure proper security of ballot papers, ballot boxes and official seals.
9. The general atmosphere at the polling stations visited.
10. Availability of adequate supplies, eg, ballot papers, official stamps and stamp-pads, indelible ink, etc.
11. Security of ballot papers prior to election.
12. Adherence to the prescribed voting procedure, including the application of indelible ink following the casting of ballots.
13. Access of party agents to polling stations.

### THE COUNT

1. Inspection of seals.
2. The process of reconciling the number of people who voted with the number of ballots cast.
3. The determination of invalid ballots.
4. The conduct of electoral officers.
5. The facilities for party representatives to witness and verify the count.

**PART B**

Questions that may be put:

**BEFORE POLLING DAY**

1. Was the Voters' Register compiled in a satisfactory way? Were people missed out? Were the names of dead people included?
2. Who are the election officials? How were they chosen? Are voters confident that they will be impartial?
3. Is the person in the street satisfied with arrangements? Will he/she vote? If not, is he/she afraid to do so?
4. Have all parties been able to campaign freely? Has the campaign been free of intimidation, etc? Have all parties had full access to the mass media?
5. Is there freedom to advertise and distribute posters, leaflets, etc?

**ON POLLING DAY**

1. Before polling starts, are the ballot boxes empty? Are they properly sealed?
2. Are all procedures being adhered to?
3. Are all parties represented at polling stations? Are they satisfied with the process?
4. Are Voters' I.D.s being properly checked? Are only those who are in possession of a Voter's I.D. and listed on the register being allowed to vote?
5. Are voters apparently voting freely? Are they enthusiastic? Do they talk freely? Do they exhibit signs of fear or intimidation?
6. Do voters understand the procedures properly? If not, are the procedures being explained fully and impartially? Are attempts being made to suggest how voters should vote?
7. Is only one person at a time being allowed into the voting booth?
8. How long are voters waiting to vote? If a long time, are some being put off?

9. Will all parties be represented at polling stations throughout voting and count?  
Are party polling agents adequately trained and vigilant?
10. Will observers have free access to all stages of the process?
11. Is the security presence oppressive?

#### **THE COUNT**

1. Are the boxes kept safe until opened? Are all parties present at opening?
2. Does the number of used ballot papers tally with the record of those who voted?
3. Are the papers counted properly? Are counting agents present? Are they satisfied with the procedure of the count?

**ANNEX VII****Interim Statement of 28 February 1996**

Sierra Leone Presidential and Parliamentary Elections, 1996

**Commonwealth Observer Group**

Tel: (232) 22 272 480  
(232) 22 272 267  
Fax: (232) 22 272 431/227

Cape Sierra Hotel  
Chalet No. 24  
Aberdeen, Freetown

**INTERIM STATEMENT**

The mandate of the Commonwealth Observer Group in Sierra Leone was to observe all relevant aspects of the country's Presidential and Parliamentary Elections, and to determine whether or not the people of Sierra Leone had the opportunity to express their will through the ballot.

We arrived in Freetown on Saturday 17 February 1996. Our leader called on the Chairman of the NPRC and Head of State, Brigadier General Julius Maada Bio, and we received extensive and in-depth briefings for four days from officials of the Interim National Electoral Commission (INEC), representatives of the political parties, resident diplomatic missions, the media and Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs). Our teams of observers were deployed to the four provinces of the country on 22 February. They covered Bo, Kenema, Port Loko, Kabala, Makeni, Kono and Freetown itself. In all these locations we received further briefings from representatives of local political parties, community leaders, NGOs and INEC officials.

We witnessed the closing stages of the registration process, the election campaign, and voter education. We observed the polling process on the two polling days, 26 and 27 February 1996, and a part of the count. No elections could have been held under more trying circumstances. The ongoing war in various parts of the country cast a long shadow over every aspect of these elections. There was unease, apprehension and a feeling of insecurity in many parts of the country, rendering the rural areas, especially in the East and the South, effectively inaccessible. The rebel Revolutionary United Front announced repeatedly that they opposed and disapproved of the elections. The attacks on Bo and Kenema on polling day as well as the gun and mortar fire in Freetown on the afternoon of the first day of polling, were obviously calculated to scare voters away and

generally intimidate the rest of the country. In addition logistical problems abounded and these hampered the transportation of voting materials. The registration of voters continued till the eve of poll.

Even so, and against all odds, the people of Sierra Leone demonstrated their determination to have the elections and were able to ensure these were held. The voter turnout in the areas we observed was impressive. The citizen voters in the queues displayed determination, good humour, tolerance and patience. The polling officials as observed by us made up for their lack of experience by their diligence, sincerity and conscientiousness. They displayed dedication that compelled admiration. We believe that the vast majority of registered voters anxious to exercise their franchise had the opportunity to do so. Clearly, the unique circumstances prevailing in the country at the time of these elections resulted in shortcomings such as the late delivery of voters registers and certain other documents to the polling stations. But thanks to the resolution and determination of the people, despite several attempts to hinder the process, these elections where they could be held, remained free of fear and intimidation.

The results of the Parliamentary and Presidential elections remain to be announced. However, on the basis of our countrywide observation, and keeping in view the extraordinary circumstances attending these elections, the people of Sierra Leone saw them as the one opportunity they had to make a new beginning. They seized that opportunity with both hands. Their determination, dignity and patience deserve to be applauded. We congratulate the people for their maturity and the faith in democracy displayed by them.

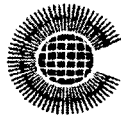
INEC exhibited unstinted dedication in the face of heavy odds and the political parties worked in co-operation with the objective of restoring democracy in the country. We, as Commonwealth Observers, were privileged to witness, at close quarters, the determination of the people of Sierra Leone to achieve democratic civilian government in their country.

**It is our hope and prayer that at the end of the electoral process, the transfer of power into the hands of the elected representatives of the people will be smooth and trouble free.**

**28 February 1996**

*ANNEX VIII*

Departure Statement of 2 March 1996



Sierra Leone Presidential and Parliamentary Elections, 1996

**Commonwealth Observer Group**

Tel: (232) 22 272 480  
 (232) 22 272 267  
 Fax: (232) 22 272 431/227

Cape Sierra Hotel  
 Chalet No. 24  
 Aberdeen, Freetown

2 March 1996

**DEPARTURE STATEMENT BY MR S.K. SINGH  
 CHAIRMAN OF THE COMMONWEALTH OBSERVER GROUP  
 IN SIERRA LEONE**

We are today returning home after two weeks in Sierra Leone, observing the political process that has led the country towards democratic civilian governance.

On Wednesday 28 February, I had issued our Interim Statement on the electoral process. We had saluted the people of Sierra Leone for their determination and resolution to move their country towards democratic rule. We had commended the members and personnel of the INEC. We had complimented the leadership of Dr James Jonah. Today we would wish to congratulate the Head of State and Chairman of the NPRC, Brigadier-General Julius Maada-Bio, for his personal commitment to the transition.

The results of this momentous election are about to be declared. Whoever emerges the winner, the real victory already belongs to the people of Sierra Leone. They have shown that they are determined to build a country devoted to liberty, democratic values, peace and true development. They have become masters of their own fate. The gold and diamonds of peace are within reach.

Sierra Leone makes a new beginning. A world of opportunities lies ahead. They will need now to forge national unity. These elections have demonstrated that the people have the will, the courage and the stamina for this.

Peace, unity of purpose and reconstruction will all need to be based on the foundations of national reconciliation. For this will be required a true generosity of spirit. We believe that they have this generosity, and also the spirit of tolerance that alone can sustain it.

The war has shattered the country's economy and subjected the people to barbarity and misery.


















The incoming civilian government, and all sides in the Parliament, leaders both of the Treasury and the Opposition will need charity and good will, generosity and mutual trust in abundant measure. We have no doubt the examples set for them by their people will guide them. In this society, we hope the people will continue to lead their leaders, as they did during the elections.

Sierra Leone is a member state of the Commonwealth. We hope its role as a vibrant democracy will be even more vigorous in our global association. We hope too that the other members of the Commonwealth will provide continuing support and assistance to the people of Sierra Leone.

As we say goodbye to them, our best wishes for peace, tranquillity, prosperity and nation building are with our brothers and sisters of Sierra Leone, and the leadership, that is emerging in this country.

## ANNEX IX

## Sample Ballot Paper, Parliamentary Elections, 26-27 February 1996

 <b>REPUBLIC OF SIERRA LEONE</b> <b>PARLIAMENTARY ELECTION</b> <b>1996</b> 			
Party Name	Party Symbol	Party Initials	Voter's Mark
Democratic Centre Party		D.C.P.	
National Unity Party		N.U.P.	
People's Progressive Party		P.P.P.	
National Republican Party		N.R.P.	
People's National Convention		P.N.C.	
United National Peoples Party		U.N.P.P.	
National Democratic Alliance		N.D.A.	
All People's Congress		A.P.C.	
National Alliance Democratic Party		N.A.D.P.	
National Unity Movement		N.U.M.	
Coalition for Progress Party		C.P.P.	
National Peoples Party		N.P.P.	
Sierra Leone People's Party		S.L.P.P.	
Social Democratic Party		S.D.P.	
Peoples Democratic Party (Sorbeh)		P.D.P.	

## ANNEX X

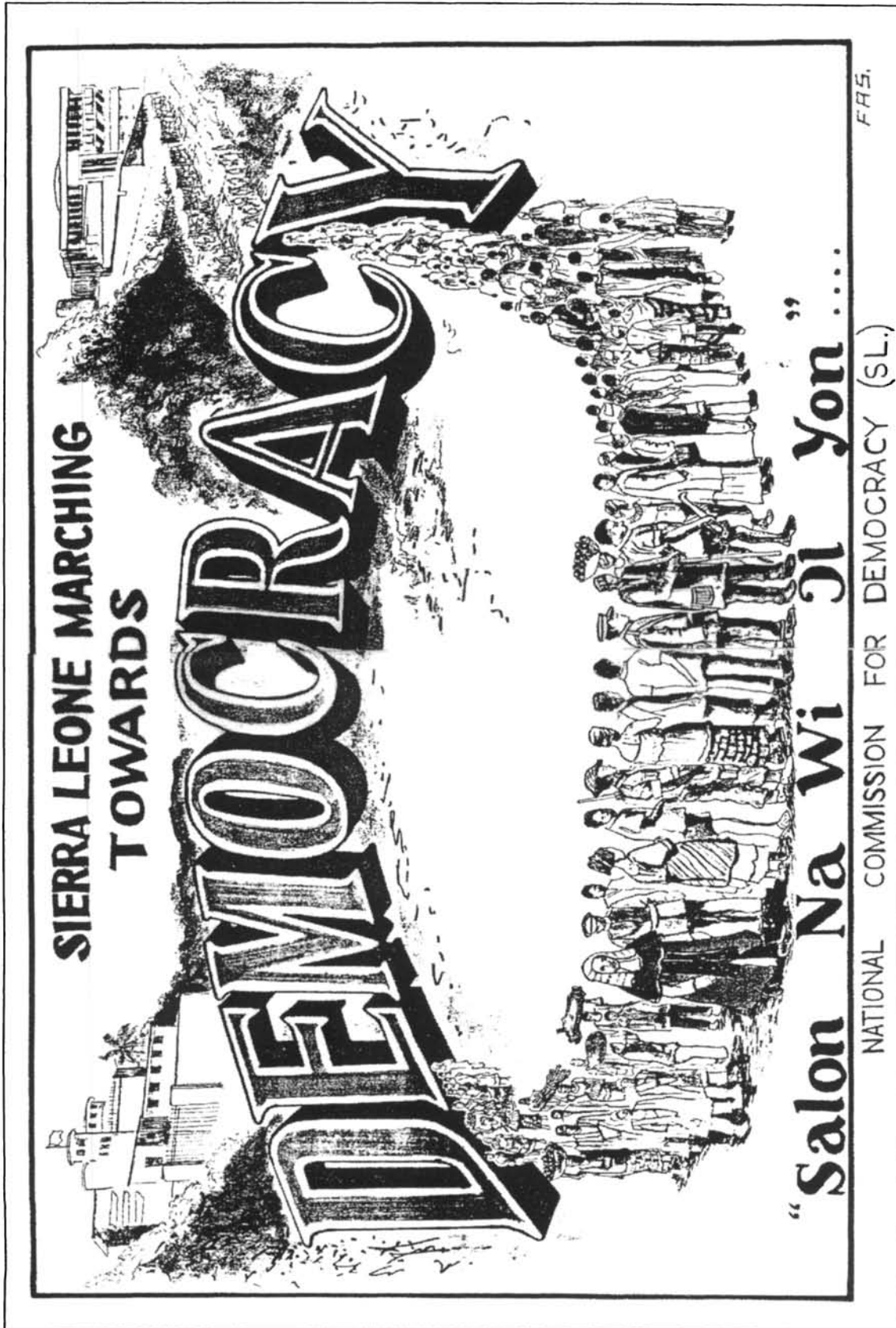
## Sample Ballot Paper, Presidential Election, 26-27 February 1996

Party Name	Candidate's Name	Party Initials	Party Symbol	Candidate's Photo	Voter's Mark
Democratic Centre Party	Abu Aliah Koroma	D.C.P.			
National Unity Party	John Karimu	N.U.P.			
People's Progressive Party	Abass Chernor Bundu	P.P.P.			
National Republican Party	Stephen Sahr Mambu	N.R.P.			
People's National Convention	Edward John Kargbo	P.N.C.			
United National Peoples Party	John Karefa-Smart	U.N.P.P.			
National Democratic Alliance	Amadu M. B. Jalloh	N.D.A.			
All People's Congress	Edward Mohamed Turay	A.P.C.			
National Alliance Democratic Party	Mohamed Yahya Sillah	N.A.D.P.			
National Unity Movement	Desmond Luke	N.U.M.			
Coalition for Progress Party	Jeredine Williams-Garho	C.P.P.			
National Peoples Party	Andrew Turay	N.P.P.			
Sierra Leone People's Party	Ahmed Tejan Kabbah	S.L.P.P.			
Social Democratic Party	Andrew Victor Lungay	S.D.P.			
Peoples Democratic Party (Sorbeh)	Thaimu Bangura	P.D.P.			

ANNEX XI

National Commission for Democracy Voter Education Posters





ANNEX XII

Interim National Electoral Commission Posters

# INEC - Ensuring Free and Fair Elections



## POLLING STATION STAFF



PRESIDING OFFICER



POLLING ASSISTANTS

## OBSERVERS



POLITICAL PARTY OBSERVERS

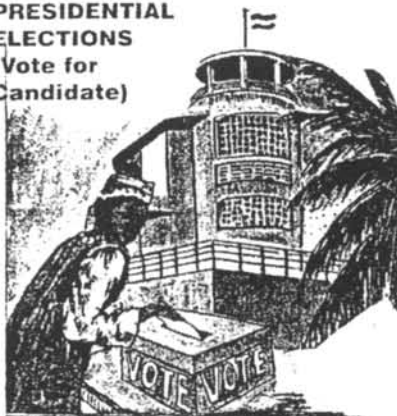


INTERNATIONAL OBSERVERS



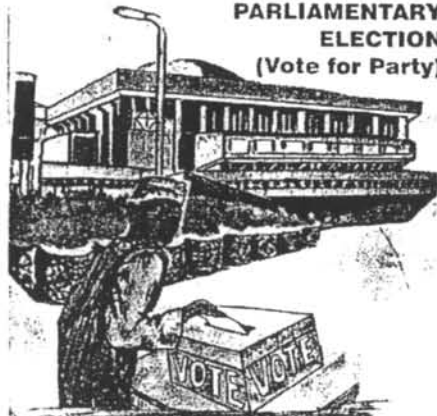
CIVIL SOCIETY GROUPS

PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS  
(Vote for Candidate)



V  
O  
T  
I  
N  
G

PARLIAMENTARY ELECTION  
(Vote for Party)



**ENTRANCE**

**OBSERVERS**

**EXIT**

**POLLING STATION**  
WHAT IT LOOKS LIKE AND WHAT TO EXPECT

**1**  
Show Voter Registration Card. Name checked and Reg. Card stamped

**2**  
Get ballot paper

**3**  
Make cross or thumb print on ballot paper. Fold ballot paper

**4**  
Put Ballot in box

**5**  
Get another ballot paper

**6**  
Make cross or thumb print on ballot paper. Fold ballot paper

**7**  
Put Ballot in box

**8**  
Finger marked with indelible ink

PUBLISHED BY INEC, VOTER EDUCATION DEPARTMENT, 15, WALLACE JOHNSON STREET, FREETOWN.

*ANNEX XIII***Statement by the Joint International Observer Group, 29 February 1996**STATEMENT**THE JOINT INTERNATIONAL OBSERVER GROUP  
SIERRA LEONE**

The Joint International Observer Group (JIOG), under the auspices of the United Nations Electoral Assistance Secretariat, fielded a total of 65 international observers to the national presidential and parliamentary elections in Sierra Leone on February 26 and 27, 1996. The observer teams included the African-American Institute, the African American Labor Center, the Commonwealth Trade Union Council, some members of the diplomatic community accredited to Sierra Leone, the Organization of African Unity, the United Kingdom, the United Nations, and the World Council of Churches.

In the weeks before the elections, some JIOG members observed the election preparations and campaign activities throughout the accessible areas of the country. Although the security situation hindered the registration process, the Interim National Electoral Commission (INEC) and the political parties strove valiantly to promote the democratic process in order to enable the Sierra Leonean people to express their will. On election day and the subsequent extension on February 27, team members observed the polls and, where possible, the count, in the following districts: Western Area (including Freetown), Bo, Bombali, Kenema, Koinadugu, Port Loko, and Kono.

In general, the JIOG was impressed with the overwhelming desire on the part of the people of Sierra Leone to exercise their democratic rights in casting a ballot for the parties and candidates of their choice, marking a return to a multi-party system. The people of Sierra Leone were determined to exercise their rights as citizens despite attempts at intimidation by armed elements, witnessed by some observers in Freetown, Bo, Kenema, and Makeni. These violent incidents did not deter the will of the people to continue the elections.

In the majority of the polling places that the JIOG observed, the elections were conducted in a procedurally correct manner. We regret that because of the security situation observers were not able to witness polling in certain rural parts mainly in the southern and eastern regions. In general, voting materials were supplied and properly utilized; polling officials generally understood their mandates and conducted the polls in an unbiased manner; party representatives and domestic poll monitors were present in most locales; and the count, where completed in the presence of international observers, proceeded in a transparent fashion.

The massive turnout of voters, procedural difficulties and security incidents that led to late openings and disruptions of the vote tended to overwhelm the polling stations and required the extension of the polls for an extra day. This caused some difficulties in securing ballot boxes and transmitting voting results.

Despite these setbacks, the JIOG witnessed a remarkably peaceful, orderly, and transparent conduct of the vote, which leads it to conclude that the results will genuinely reflect the will of the people of Sierra Leone, and usher in an era of democracy.

The JIOG would like to thank the government of Sierra Leone for their invitation to observe the election. The JIOG congratulates the people of Sierra Leone for their patience and determination, and would like to pay a special tribute to Dr. James Jonah and the staff of INEC for its remarkable achievements in conducting these elections under trying circumstances.

February 29, 1996

ISBN 978-1-84859-562-0



ISBN : 0 85092 462 6

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