

**Speech of H. E. Mr. Cheng Wenju
Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of
the People's Republic of China to the Republic of Sierra Leone
at the Chinese National Day Reception**

**Honorable Vice President Solomon Berewa,
Honorable Acting Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation Dr. Mohamed
Kamara,
Honorable Ministers and Members of Parliament,
Members of the Diplomatic and Counselor Corps,
Distinguished Guests,
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

October 1st of 2005 marks the 56th anniversary of the Founding of the People's Republic of China. It's my great pleasure to celebrate it with everyone present here. Let me begin by expressing my warm welcome and sincere thanks for your gracing.

Since the Founding of the People's Republic of China, Chinese people have made remarkable achievements, especially during the 26 years of reform and opening-up. In the year past, the Communist Party of China, led by the Secretary General H. E. Mr. Hu Jintao, put forward the concept of following a scientific approach of development and constructing a harmonious society, initiate building a conservation-minded society, and endeavor to reach balanced and sustainable development of the economy, society and environment. In China, the growth rate of GDP this year is above 9%, and the volume of foreign trade reaches 1 trillion US dollars, taking the third place in global trade. Now the RMB exchange rate system is more market-oriented and flexible. Environmental protection and rational use of resources are gradually strengthened. Consequently, the speedy, steady and sound development in China is now providing powerful impetus for the rejuvenation of global economy.

My Distinguished Guests,

We are elated to see that the friendly relations between China and Sierra Leone have been developing steadily, and bilateral cooperation has been extended consistently. China has all along provided assistance within her capacity to Sierra Leone for the latter's development. According to the Follow-up Action of Forum on China-Africa Cooperation, the Chinese side has put more strength on training professionals of African countries including Sierra Leone, free of charge. Only last year, there were more than 50 Sierra Leoneans studying or attending seminars in China. It is estimated that the total number of Sierra Leoneans attending training courses in China will surpass 80 this year. China will continue to provide Sierra Leone with intelligence support in the long run. I always believe that support and assistance are mutual. With this in mind, I would like to take this opportunity to express my gratitude to the government and people of Sierra Leone for your commitment to the one China policy, and for your efforts in supporting Chinese people building our country.

Some returned Sierra Leonean trainees from China think highly of the achievements of China, claiming that China has become a developed country. In their eyes, China will take the lead in the 21st century. We feel grateful for their kind words and full confidence in China, but we are quite clear that there are numerous problems, difficulties and challenges in our road to progress. As you may aware, not all of the cities in the vast areas of China are so developed as Beijing and Shanghai. The per capita GDP of Chinese people has just reached over 1200 US dollars, ranking well behind 100th place in the world. There are 26 million people live in poverty in the rural areas of China. Meanwhile, 22 million people in cities live under subsistence allowance. Every year, we have about 24 million unemployed and over 60 million disabled, who are in great need of care and love. Therefore, development is of crucial importance to our country with a large population of more than 1.3 billion.

In regard of this, China will continue to highly uphold the banner of peace, development and cooperation, consolidating and promoting as always the friendly cooperative relations with other countries, especially African countries, to whom China will increase assistance and support. At the High-level Meeting on Financing for Development at the United Nations Summit, the Chinese Government has just solemnly announced that China will accord zero tariff treatment to certain products from all the 39 Least Developed Countries having diplomatic relations with China; China will further write off all the overdue free- and low-interest governmental loans as of the end of 2004 owned by the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries having diplomatic relations with China; within the next three years, China will provide 10 billion US dollars in concessional loans and preferential export buyer's credit to developing countries; in the next three years, China will increase its assistance to developing countries, African countries in particular, by providing them with anti-malaria drugs and other medicines; and China will help train 30 thousand personnel of various professions for developing countries within the next three years.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

China is a peace-loving nation. The development of China will not impede or threat anyone, but contribute to the peace, stability and common development of the whole world. 21st century is a century of development not only for China, but for all. China is always ready to join hands with all other nations in building a harmonious world.

Now, Ladies and Gentlemen, let me conclude my speech by proposing a toast:

To the flourishing and prosperity of China and Sierra Leone,

To the ever-lasting friendship of our two countries,

And to the good health and well-being of His Excellency President Alhaji Dr. Ahmad Tejan Kabbah and Honorable Vice President Solomon Berewa, and every friend present here.

I thank you!