

**STATEMENT BY H. E. CHINESE AMBASSADOR CHENG WENJU
AT THE OPENING CEREMONY OF THE 2005 SIERRA LEONE
INTERNATIONAL COMMODITIES EXHIBITION AND TRADE AFFAIR
(November 22, 2005)**

His Excellency President Alhaji Dr. Ahmad Tejan Kabbah,
Honorable Vice President Solomon Berewa,
Honorable Minister of Trade and Industry Kadi Sesay and other Senior Officials of
the Sierra Leonean Government,
President of the Chinese Chamber of Commerce,
Entrepreneurs of the Henan Goji Investment and Development Company limited,
Distinguished Guests,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Good afternoon!

It is my great pleasure to be invited to the opening ceremony of the 2005 Sierra Leone International Commodities Exhibition and Trade Affair co-hosted by the Chinese Chamber of Commerce and the Ministry of Trade and Industry of Sierra Leone, and undertaken by Henan Goji Investment and Development Company limited. On behalf of the Chinese Government, I want to first of all extend my warm congratulations to the official inauguration of the exhibition, and express my sincere thanks to His Excellency President Alhaji Dr. Ahmad Tejan Kabbah and Hon. Vice President Solomen Berewa for their gracious presence, and to the Sierra Leonean Government and Hon. Minister of Trade and Industry Kadi Sesay for their support and care rendered to Henan Guoji and other Chinese Companies in Sierra Leone.

We are glad to see that with the joint efforts of both Chinese and Sierra Leonean sides, the Henan Guoji Trade and Industrial Zone, since its inception in April this year, has enjoyed a smooth development. The successful launching of this Exhibition marks another delightful achievement in the building process of the Trade and Industrial Zone. As one of the major projects of Chinese investment in Sierra Leone, the establishment of the Zone added fresh substance to our bilateral cooperation of mutual benefit in the new situation, and set a sound example for the potential foreign investors to embark upon their enterprises in Sierra Leone. Having stepped out of the civil war, the Government and people of Sierra Leone are currently undertaking the mission of national rebuilding and economic recovery. At this very stage, Henan Gouoji and many other Chinese investors have taken active part in the post-war construction in Sierra Leone, and on the basis of mutual benefit and interests, made their own contributions to the country's development in the areas of tax collection, employment promotion, and poverty reduction among the others. As far as Sierra Leone is concerned, the existence and development of Chinese companies is not a threat or hindrance, but on the contrary a constructive driving force for the country's economic and social progress.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Since the establishment of diplomatic ties between China and Sierra Leone over thirty years ago, our traditional friendly relations have enjoyed steady development and become increasingly closer, laying a solid foundation for the Chinese investment in Sierra Leone. The constantly deepening economic cooperation between our two sides has in turn consolidated the friendly bilateral ties. I want to take this opportunity to reaffirm the Chinese Government's commitment in further developing our friendly bilateral relations as well as its encouragement and support for the Chinese investment in Sierra Leone, for which the Chinese Embassy will also keep providing necessary assistance. We are fully aware that the success of an enterprise depends on not only the scientific internal management, but also the viable external environment. The future of Henan Goji Trade and Industrial Zone would pose a direct impact on the country's prospect of attracting foreign investment, and the latter would have further effect on the whole process of the country's economic recovery. We sincerely hope that the Sierra Leonean Government and all walks of life could continue to support and care for the operation of Chinese and other foreign enterprises, and endeavor to foster a better policy and public environment, for the purpose of attracting more and more Chinese investors to come, who will work together with Sierra Leonean people for the common goals of building a peaceful, stable and prosperous nation.

Before conclusion, let me wish a satisfactory success to the 2005 International Commodities Exhibition and Trade Affair, may all the foreign and indigenous enterprises in Sierra Leone flourish and thrive, and hope that under the leadership of His Excellency President Alhaji Dr. Ahmad Tejan Kabbah and Honorable Vice President Solomon Berewa, the people of Sierra Leone will make new achievements in the path of national construction.

I thank you.