

**STATEMENT BY H. E. CHINESE AMBASSADOR CHENG WENJU
AT THE LAUNCHING CEREMONY OF UPWARDS**

H. E. Vice President Solomon Berewa,
Hon. Ministers,
National Coordinator of UPWARDS Mrs. Doris Kargbo,
Paramount Chief Masa-Paki Kabombor II,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Good morning.

It is my great pleasure and privilege to participate in the formal launching of UPWARDS. First of all, please allow me to express my heartfelt thanks to my brothers and sisters in Paki Massabong Chiefdom for your warm welcome. You make me feel at home. I should also take this opportunity to extend my earnest congratulations to the establishment of UPWARDS. At present, Sierra Leone has stepped into a historical stage of peace building, economic recovery and national reconstruction. At this critical stage, you make positive response to the call of H. E. President Kabbah and Vice President Berewa, take meaningful actions by mobilizing the women and youth to develop agriculture, and strive to reach the goals of food security and poverty alleviation by yourselves. I am deeply impressed by your initiative and strong will, and sincerely wish every success on your efforts which will hopefully set a good example for the others fighting against poverty.

Today's Sierra Leone recalls me what China was like half a century ago. In the aftermath of foreign invasion and civil war, China was a scene of devastation everywhere and as poor as Sierra Leone today. In order to solve the food problem, the Chinese government and people united and engaged themselves in agriculture production on their own. In the spirit of self-reliance and through hard work, the Chinese people have now basically realized food security and succeeded in feeding 22 percent of the global population by using 7 percent of the farmland in the whole world. In today's China, hunger is already a history. Considering China's experience, I firmly believe that what has been achieved by the Chinese people can certainly be achieved by Sierra Leonean people, too. Frankly speaking, you have abundant natural endowments for agriculture development, such as fertile land, rich water resources, adequate sunlight, and so on. This country should not in poverty with such good conditions. As long as you get united and stand on your own feet, plus the support and assistance from your government and the international community, the goal of food security in this region will be soon reached and the tomorrow of Sierra Leone will be surely better.

As an old friend, the Chinese government and people will, as always and to the best of its capacity, support Sierra Leone's agriculture development by continuously providing farming machines and personnel training, and further expanding our bilateral cooperation in agriculture. China stands ready to extend a helping hand to the government and people of Sierra Leone in their pursuit of food security. To show my felicitations on and support to the efforts of UPWARDS and wish you a good omen, I would like to make a humble contribution of 3 million Leone to UPWARDS and hope it will help your work to some extent.

Thank you everyone.