

**Keynote Speech by H. E. Chinese Ambassador Cheng Wenju  
at the Launching Ceremony of the Brightness Project  
(9 February 2006)**

Honourable Minister of Health and Sanitation Mrs. Abator Thomas,  
Respected Director of King Harman Road Hospital Dr. Alex Kanu,  
Respected Chinese Medical team leader Mrs. Qian Hongyan and her staff,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Good morning.

I believe that at the moment many friends are having the same feeling of excitement and joy as I am for this ceremony of special significance. First of all, let me have the honor and privilege to announce that under the support of Chinese Embassy and in collaboration with King Harman Road Hospital, the cataract recovery program in the short name of “Brightness Project” to be implemented by the Chinese medical team is formally launched today.

People may ask why the Chinese side decided to take the initiative of setting up this Project. I would like to tell you that the initiative comes from an impressive but true story. In Sierra Leone there is a Chinese doctor who is frequently visited by local cataract sufferers. It gravely concerns him that most of the patients cannot afford operations and have no choice but continue to live in darkness. In order to bring brightness back to those poor cataract sufferers, he offers to finance their operation expenses from his slender living allowance. Under the support of his Chinese colleges and the hospital, he has until now conducted successful cataract operations for more than 30 local patients who have consequently been turned from the burdens of their respective families to the valuable human resources for the society. The magnanimous act of this Chinese doctor has attracted a great deal of public attention and won the applause of mass local people. Of course this story is no longer a secret and we all know that the hospital I referred to is King Harman Road Hospital, and the hero of the story is the oculist of the Chinese medical team, Dr. Yue Hui. Now I propose, let us clap our hands for Dr. Yue Hui in appreciation of his noble character and great medical skill, and express our thanks for the precious support of King Harman Road Hospital.

After being aware of the aforesaid story, as the Chinese Ambassador, I feel proud of my country boasting such good doctors as Dr. Yue, and meanwhile identify myself with a large number of Sierra Leonean brothers and sisters who are still suffering from the cataract illness and unable to receive operations. In a bid to boost the magnanimous act of Dr. Yue and the Chinese medical team, and do more good things to the local people to the best of my capacity, I came up with a fresh idea of initiating a program called “Brightness Project”. The Chinese Embassy will provide financial assistance to King Harman Hospital for cataract operations so as to help more cataract sufferers out of the illness and get them back to their normal life as builders of Sierra Leone. This year, I plan to offer 12 million Leone to cover most of the operation expenses of 150 cataract patients. In one year, 150 Sierra Leonean brothers and sisters will be able to start enjoying the brightness again and 150 ordinary families will therefore embrace their new lives full of hope.

I also hope that Chinese medical team and King Harman Road Hospital could carry on their excellent cooperation for the full success of the “Brightness Project”.

Since the establishment of diplomatic ties between our two countries, one after another team of Chinese medical workers has come across tens of thousands of miles to Sierra Leone and been noting down wonderful pages in the Sino-Sierra Leone friendship. The team we have now is from the capital city of Hunan Province and every member of them is an expert in his or her specialty. They are very willing to make their contributions to the course of health and sanitation in this country. However, due to some local constraints such as the lack of medical equipments and medicines, their medical skills have not come into a full play. The express train of the Chinese medical team can only move ahead in low gear. I sincerely hope that the Sierra Leonean government and all walks of life will in the future render more understanding and support to the Chinese medical team and as a result enable them to give a even better play of their technical advantages so that the effect of Chinese medical assistance would be further enhanced and more local patients could benefit. Here, I wish to restate that the Chinese government and people will as always support the development of various causes of Sierra Leone including health and sanitation and make relentless efforts to further consolidate and strengthen the traditional friendship between our two countries.

I thank you.