



**Talking Points: President's Meeting  
with Development Partners.**

**Freetown, State House - 25 March**

**2020**

Good morning and Welcome to State House.

I requested this meeting to discuss this raging global pandemic, Corona Virus (COVID-19).

More now than ever, the Corona virus reminds us of our inter-connectedness, our mutual dependency, and why partnerships among nations and institutions matter in resolving global issues whether they are related to health, gender, poverty and inequality, climate change, and more.

1. We have taken specific measures to prevent, protect, (and in the event of an incident), curtail the spread of COVID-19. The Minister of Health will speak to some of those measures.
2. But essentially, we have strongly advised through expanded public education campaigns social distancing, hand hygiene, and cough etiquette. At this point, we have intensified our public health campaigns across the country and we intend to use all possible structures to further disseminate Corona related information. We call on partner engagement and support in this area too.
3. We have elevated our emergency preparedness to Level 2 with all structures and dedicated call centres, activated

contact tracing and disease surveillance teams at all levels, and reviewed our quarantine policies and practices.

4. We intend to use data to generate models, plan, and structure our interventions. We intend to leverage existing digital investments at the level of government and also seek to support local ICT and technology ecosystems. We seek public-private partnerships and the possible establishment of an Emergency Innovation Fund to develop and launch products that will support our fight against COVID-19.
5. We have suspended air travel and we have deployed more security forces to entry ports to support compliance. We have also activated three testing centres, a ready isolation unit, and we are equipping limited treatment facilities. We have a wish-list of additional equipment we wish to procure for treatment centres.
6. But we seek overall support from partners to support our preparedness by supporting the procurement or transfer of medical equipment and infection control supplies and to also strengthen our healthcare facilities across the country.

7. We have a lean government response plan and structure which I chair. There is a strategic component comprising the task force and a broad-based consultative group that comprises development partners and the UN system. There is an operational component that coordinates technical issues, administrative tasks, and day-to-day operations. The Chief Minister will provide more detail.
  
8. We have declared a State of Public Emergency to facilitate a more agile but robust response to a rapidly changing situation in the sub-region.
  
9. Let me assure you that our actions during the period of the emergency will be non-discriminatory, proportionate, and undertaken only if necessary. This is not a lockdown. But we will consider further measures based on developments in our neighbouring countries and in our country.
  
10. We anticipate a disproportionate economic impact. But we intend to remain disciplined and focused on our

agenda of fiscal discipline, public financial management, and our overarching fight against corruption.

11. I have set broad achievable goals that include supporting the private sector and local entrepreneurship, maintaining a stable foreign exchange rate and stable prices for key commodities, expanding the social safety net to cushion the impact of the anticipated contraction of the economy., and supporting labour-based public works plus assistance for the local production and processing of staple food items.
12. The Finance Minister will discuss details of the three possible scenarios we have anticipated, projected economic impact, and associated risks.
13. In view of the situation, Government is seeking augmentation of our current allocation under the Extended Credit Facility Programme with the International Monetary Fund.

Additionally, we are also seeking three key interventions:

- Debt relief from the IMF under the Containment Window of the Catastrophe Containment and Relief Trust.

- Debt relief from other Bilateral Partners and Multilateral Agencies
- Additional grant resources from other Development Partners.

I will now call on the sector Ministers to provide us with more detail. I thank you.