

**Your Excellency, the President of
the Republic of Sierra Leone, Dr
Ernest Bai Koroma**

**Your Excellency, the Honourable
Vice President, Chief Sam Sumana**

**Your Worship, the Mayor of the
Municipality of Freetown**

My Lord Chief Justice

Honourable Cabinet Ministers

**Members of The Diplomatic and
Consular Corp**

**Managing Directors of the Banking
Industry and Other Financial
Institutions**

Heads of Private Sector and

Professional Organisations

**Representatives of Civil Society
Organisations**

Members of the Fourth Estate

Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen

I am delighted to welcome you this morning on behalf of the Board of Director, Management and Staff of Bank of Sierra Leone to the formal launching of the new Family of Resized Banknotes by H. E. the President, Dr. Ernest Bai Koroma. I would like to profoundly thank His Excellency the president who, in the midst of his busy schedule, has graciously accepted our invitation to officially launch the new resized family of banknotes to the general public of the Republic of Sierra Leone.

Indeed this is an historic occasion in the operation of the Bank of Sierra Leone, since we are witnessing for the first time the introduction of a new family of resized banknotes.

Your Excellency, Distinguished Guests, the introduction of the resized banknotes stems from the emergence of several drawbacks in the old family of banknotes. These relate to episodes of counterfeit attacks on various denominations of the old notes due to inadequate security features. Also old notes were not protected with post print vanish and had a limited life span. Furthermore, the previous notes were not incorporated with features to assist

the blind and illiterate to identify various denominations and the Bank because of the same size feature witnessed a lot of oddment in the packets and bundles being paid into the banking system.

There were also problems emanating from the ten years civil war during which period large quantities of our currency was smuggled to neighbouring countries and some were burnt or destroyed under various circumstances, making it difficult for the Central Bank to have a definitive position of its currency in circulation, with severe impediment to monetary policy management.

Against this background in 2008, the Bank undertook extensive consultation

with regional Central Banks and other supervisory bodies in the region which provided rewarding insights into currency industry trends, cost and practices.

Discussions were also held with De La Rue, our security printers and they were able to provide useful technical advice on recent anti-counterfeiting features and enhanced notes durability techniques.

In 2009, after delaying the printing of the old notes for two years, the Bank decided to discontinue the printing of the existing one-size banknotes and progress to a family of resized banknotes with enhanced security features and improved durability.

This decision is in accordance with section 22, subsection 1 of the Bank of Sierra Leone Act 2000 which states that “the Bank shall have the sole right of issuing notes and coins in Sierra Leone”.

Your Excellency, Distinguished Guests, today, we are all privileged to be witnesses to the launching of the new resized banknotes in denominations of **one thousand (1,000), two thousand (2,000), five thousand (5,000) and ten thousand (10,000) Leones.** This denomination structure is currently considered optimum for our currency system particularly taking into account the minted Le500 coins which will

continue in circulation as legal tender.

With effect from today, denominations of Le1,000, Le2,000, Le5,000 and Le10,000 banknotes would be made available for distribution and circulation throughout the country. The Bank of Sierra Leone, through our head office and branch, has provided the necessary logistics to ensure that the public obtains sufficient supply of the new currency.

Your Excellency, Distinguished Guests, please permit me to highlight some of the benefits accruing from the introduction of this new resized notes

which are enormous and numerous. They include amongst others, the following:

- ◆ More banknotes can be printed from the same banknote paper thereby minimising the costs;
- ◆ Resized notes will make it easier for the public to identify and separate denominations;
- ◆ Most importantly, the security features on the resized notes meet the highest standards of contemporary banknote security, thus posing a challenge in counterfeiting;
- ◆ For the visually impaired, other than the differentiated sizes, there are

“Cricket Leg Features” that separate denominations;

- ◆ Smaller banknotes are easy to handle and very wallet friendly; and
- ◆ Banknotes have been treated by a special post print varnish for durability that protects them from wearing out so easily if not properly handled.

Your Excellency, Ladies and Gentlemen the Bank has taken this modernisation opportunity of introducing the family of resized bank notes as part of the process of the development of the payment system by upgrading the public security features(feel,look,tilt), Teller Assisted Security features (ultraviolet lamp & magnifying glass) and Automated

Assisted Security features for ATMs and high speed sorting machines and also incorporating new features that will make them easier to be identified by the blind and illiterate.

The overall design of the new resized family of banknotes retains almost all of the features and style of the current one sized series of banknotes to provide continuity for easy general public recognition, embedded with new enhanced security features that have been highlighted in the various posters currently being displayed.

The Bank has already commenced country-wide campaign to educate the public about the key security features of

the new banknotes and will continue to do so.

Your Excellency, Distinguished Guests, in as much as we all look forward to the introduction of these new notes, I would like to stress the significance of note handling which has been of great concern to the Bank. Printing replacements of soiled and mutilated notes have high cost implications for the Bank.

We therefore advise the public to handle all currency banknotes with due care and diligence, as the cost of printing is very high. While the Bank of Sierra Leone is determined to implement a clean notes policy, it is not sustainable for any

country to be replacing large quantities of soiled and mutilated notes on a continuous basis to ensure the supply of new banknotes at all times.

On this note, therefore, we guarantee that public sensitisation on proper note handling will be a continuous process even after today's launching. Though the new banknotes have been treated with post print varnish to enhance durability, proper handling will increase the expected lifespan of these notes thus reducing the cost of reprinting.

Your Excellency, Distinguished Guests, measures regarding the withdrawal of old notes and injection of new ones have been put in place. We

note, that this exercise, is not expected to impact negatively on the core monetary policy objective of the Bank but rather would enhance monetary policy management.

There will be a twelve (12) months period from the date of the launch for the old and new notes to co-circulate as legal tender. It is important to note that the value of the new notes continues to remain at par with that of the old notes. However, in accordance with Section 26(3) of the Bank of Sierra Leone Act 2000, the public will be advised on the status of outstanding notes after the 12 months period and when they will cease to be legal tender.

We will also continue to work with the commercial banks and other stakeholders to ensure a smooth transition process. Commercial banks will be expected to pay their customers only in new notes, whilst they receive both the old and new ones. Commercial banks will also be expected to sort out the banknotes separately. All the old notes will be returned to the Bank of Sierra Leone for verification and destruction under stringent internal controls.

To conclude, permit me to state that we expect the continued support of the public on the introduction of the new family of resized banknotes and continue

to appeal that the notes be treated with the pride and care our national currency deserves. Over the past weeks preceding the launching, substantial collaborative work has been done by officers of the Bank, financial institutions, media organisations, commercial entities, etc. I would like to take this opportunity to thank all parties involved in the successful accomplishment of this exercise. We also expect that more activities and collaboration will take place in the weeks and months ahead, focusing on distribution and public education. In this regard, I would only ask for your continued support and participation.

Your Excellency, Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen, on behalf of the Board of Director, Management and Staff of the Bank of Sierra Leone, I once again thank you all for taking time off your busy schedules to attend this momentous occasion. I would also like to thank the Security Printers **De La Rue**, not only for a job well done in printing the banknotes, but also for assisting the Bank of Sierra Leone in providing materials for training and our sensitisation programme.

I thank you for your attention.