**STATEMENT DELIVERED BY DR. KAIFALA MARAH, CHIEF OF STAFF, EITI CHAMPION IN SIERRA LEONE AT THE 5TH EITI GLOBAL CONFERENCE HELD IN PARIS, FRANCE-2ND -3RD MARCH, 2011**

Mr. Chairman

Your Excellencies

Representatives of Governments

Representatives of the Extractive Industries

Representatives of Civil Society Organizations

Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen of the EITI family

On behalf of His Excellency the President, Dr. Ernest Bai Koroma and the people of Sierra Leone, let me thank the Board and the EITI International Secretariat for their untiring effort in organizing this conference and for inviting us to participate so that we can share and discuss our progress and challenges in advancing the EITI process. I must state upfront regret that His Excellency Dr Ernest Bai Koroma did not make it to this very important global forum because of other strategic and pressing internal matters. I bring generous greetings from the President.

Let me thank the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) and the French Government for hosting the conference.

Mr. Chairman, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen, since 2002 when this initiative was launched, there is abundant evidence that more countries have joined in implementing the initiative while the number of actors supporting it is growing constantly. This is a testimony that transparency and accountability in the extractive sector is a growing concern that requires global effort to shelve the shackles of poverty so that the majority of our people can live in dignity and peace.

Mr. Chairman, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen, Sierra Leone in the past had challenges like many developing countries in the management and distribution of wealth from the extractive industry. We are now awakened to the factors that precipitated those challenges and conflicts, and as such, the EITI and other public sector reform initiatives, will serve as engine of growth and development as envisioned in the government’s “**Agenda for Change”**. In this regard, the commitment of government to become EITI compliant includes the following:

* Development of the core minerals policy,
* The management and functional review of the Ministry of Mineral Resources to recalibrate the sector,
* The establishment of a Presidential Task Force to review mining contracts,
* Adoption of activities leading to the setting up of the National Minerals Agency,
* The enactment of the 2009 Mines and Minerals Act, and
* The establishment of the National Environment Protection Agency.

**Other pending strategic initiatives include:**

* A review of the environmental regulations to reflect international best practice,
* Introduction of a new self-assessment template to take stock of EITI implementation in collaboration with stakeholders, and
* The introduction of a Freedom of Information Bill.

It may interest you that our commitment to reforms over the last three years has witnessed for example, improvement in doing business. We have moved twenty places up since 2007 in the international doing business ranking. The continued commitment of President Koroma has recently been recognized by an African Magazine as the 9th highest performing president on the African continent.

Mr. Chairman, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen, you will recall that Sierra Leone produced her first Reconciliation and Validation reports in 2010 but only made “meaningful progress” rather than “compliant”. This is a serious concern to the government and as a result, recommendations such as setting up a full fledge secretariat, developing a costed work plan, reviewing the composition of the Multi Stakeholder Group and its terms of reference, implementation of the communication strategy, adopting the recommendations in the reconciliation report and the legal enhancement of EITI are being pursued by the government. All of these are now reflected in the 2011-2012 workplan. Actions on some of these concerns have been completed whilst some are ongoing.

Mr. Chairman, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen, our first reconciliation report dealt with only minerals but in the next report, it is our intention to include the oil/gas sector. We have thought it expedient to have a separate reporting template for oil/gas sector included so that information from this sector can be made public even though there is an on- going analysis to ascertain whether large commercial deposit exist. In this regard, the World Bank has been requested to field a consultant to undertake a scoping study of the sector before incorporated.

We are aware of the challenges we face in implementing the EITI initiative but it is clear from the sessions we have had these few days that the benefits to governments, companies and the people are great. In this regard, let me on behalf of the government and people of Sierra Leone assure this conference that we remain committed to the process and shall accelerate the pace and ensure that we become compliant. Most importantly, we will continue to deepen and broaden the scope of partnership with the civil society.

Mr. Chairman, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen, let me register our profound gratitude to the out-going chairman, Dr. Peter Eigen for providing leadership to the process and for three times taking the initiative to meet with H.E, the President, Dr. Ernest Bai Koroma on the EITI.

We are also grateful to the other members of the Board and staff of the Secretariat for their valuable inputs into the process. To our development partners, particularly the World Bank, GIZ, UNDP , ADB and DfID, we thank you for your unflinching support and we continue to request for more support so that Sierra Leone becomes compliant.

To the civil society organizations, we thank you for monitoring and evaluating the process and please don’t relent on this as the success of the EITI rests on your shoulders.

To the in-coming chairperson of the Board (**Clare Short**), we welcome you to your new assignment. Let me assure you that we will provide you the support it takes to strengthen and deepen the process.

I THANK YOU FOR YOUR ATTENTION.