



NATIONAL GRAND COALITION PARTY

Office of the Chairman and Leader



PRESS RELEASE

STATEMENT BY THE NATIONAL GRAND COALITION (NGC) ON THE COMMISSION OF ENQUIRY

FREETOWN, 22 October 2018: The Government Transition Team in its report was categorical that there had been very serious cases of corruption and mismanagement involving the President and top Government officials in the last APC administration. Following the publication of the transition report, the views and opinions expressed by the public were once again divided along political lines, roughly red versus green reactions.

On the one hand, those in sympathy with the past government including the former President and the top APC hierarchy were quick to debunk the report as containing baseless claims and being tantamount to a “witch hunt.” On the other hand, members and supporters of the current Government pointed out instances and made allegations of corruption and graft that had reached unimaginable proportions and that had brought the State to near collapse.

We in the NGC maintain that corruption is too serious an issue to be reduced to a mere political game. Corruption is at the heart of all our problems. It has penetrated our governance system, devoured our institutions and eaten into the mindsets of our people.

The NGC considered it premature to draw conclusions from the claims made in the Government Transition Report because even the Team was aware that there was need for a more thorough examination of their own observations and suspicions before the people of Sierra Leone could see the true picture of how their country has been run in the past ten years.

Undoubtedly, that is why they proposed the establishment of a Commission of Enquiry which is now going through its final stages in Parliament. And if need be, cases before the Commission that would require further judicial process will be referred to the regular courts of justice thereby allowing for the rule of law to prevail.

The NGC made the promise to the people of Sierra Leone that if voted for in the 2018 elections we would fight corruption to save the nation from decay. We therefore declare that although we are not in authority we will give our full support to the Commissions of Enquiry for as long as due process is always followed and citizens are treated as innocent until they are proven guilty.

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We want to encourage the Government to continue to unravel the mysteries of corruption in our country and, when the facts are known, to ensure that impunity or the culture of “buff case” is properly addressed and precedents are set so that “prospective robbers of State resources” will be discouraged and deterred from pursuing their dark designs.

In fact, we are of the view that in cases where Government officials and their collaborators are found to be guilty of gross misappropriation and plunder of State resources that should otherwise have been used to strengthen our economy and provide essential services to the people, in addition to returning the money they should also be made to serve jail terms.

Furthermore, we believe that action against corruption should not only be retrospective. We are expecting that those who may indulge in corruption today will be pursued with the same vigour and thoroughness as those who were corrupt yesterday.

If Government displays consistency and impartiality in its drive against corruption, then the accusations of witch hunt would not hold. Corruption has eaten deep into our society and we are expecting corrupt functionaries and their beneficiaries to put up stiff resistance. But we have vowed to our people that we will provide constructive opposition and change the entire script in democratic practice in Sierra Leone.

In conclusion we would posit the following litmus tests to ascertain the credibility of the Commissions of Enquiry and to determine whether due process will be followed:

1. For the work of the Commission of Enquiry to be complete and credible, Vote Controllers, including Permanent Secretaries must be included because they are at the heart of financial transactions in all government institutions and parastatals. Ministers or Heads of parastatals may not withdraw money or issue contracts without the signature concurrence of their Permanent Secretaries or Vote Controllers.
2. The Enquiries must be transparent, thorough and fair to allow the innocent to go free and the guilty to face the full penalty of the law. It will therefore be necessary for the proceedings to be covered live on radio and television to help create public awareness about what accountability means and for the public to draw its own conclusions on whether the process is fair or a witch hunt.
3. To prevent abuse of human rights and freedoms, the tenure of the Commissions cannot be open-ended. They must be time bound and completed within one year so that those who are innocent can receive speedy relief from the stress they may be undergoing during the process, to allow the Government to get on with the work it has been given to do and for the nation to move on. The Government must ensure that these Commissions of Enquiry are not a charade; for justice delayed is justice denied.

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Ultimately, the execution of the proposed Commissions of Enquiry will give us an insight in- to whether the New Direction is truly a movement for change and progress.

Dr. Dennis Bright
Chairman and Leader



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