

MR. SPEAKER, HONOURABLE MEMBERS

I. INTRODUCTION

Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members, I rise to move that the Bill entitled, "An Act to provide for the services for Sierra Leone for the Financial Year 2014" be read for the first time.

2. Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members, you will all recall that His Excellency, the President Dr. Ernest Koroma, made a commitment to improve the lots of youths and women of our beloved country, Sierra Leone. Government has therefore dedicated this budget to the youth, women and our workforce. Hence, the *Theme: "Improving the Livelihood of Youth, Women and our Workforce."*

3. This budget is the first annual plan of the Agenda for Prosperity (2013-18) aimed at charting the road to our collective prosperity and to a Middle Income Country (MIC) Status. This budget offers new opportunities, it provides for a new economic model and a paradigm shift in our national economic development.

4. This is a pro-poor budget that provides the foundation to diversify our economy, to be globally competitive and to accelerate our human development. In so doing, it proposes to improve labour conditions and employment opportunities for our youth and women, improve governance, mainstream social protection and empower our youth and women. This is a people centred budget, a plan for inclusive economy and finance, and a strategy that put money in the pockets of our people.

5. This budget subsidizes tuition fees for about 18,000 University Students, provides school fees subsidy for about 1,350,000 school children, improve access to credit for our youths and women, establishes a Fund to train our youths and women, creates a Fund to economically empower our youths and women, provides opportunities for our youths and women to actively participate in the agriculture value-chain and other enterprises, and protect our girls from teenage pregnancy, among others.