

KEYNOTE ADDRESS BY THE HON. VICE PRESIDENT, DR. VICTOR BOCKARIE FOH AT
THE 225th ANNIVERSARY FOR THE CELEBRATION OF THE FOUNDING OF FREETOWN
11 MARCH 2017

Salutation!

First, let me apologize for the absence of His Excellency the President, Dr. Ernest Bai Koroma. He has asked me to bring greetings to you and to let you know he is celebrating with us this moment. As we celebrate the Founding of Freetown, it is important that we remind ourselves of the history of our early painful and humble beginning.

History still has records of the painful experiences of our forefathers, who were captured and sold into Slavery. There are records of the sad experiences of our people on board Slave Ships on their way to Work in the Plantations of the Americas. We have read of the inhuman conditions in the hands of the Slave Masters in the Plantations. Though, painful as that era was, it is now part of history. We must take advantage of the challenging circumstances of our history to build a strong and united Sierra Leone.

Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen, before 1792, this location renamed Freetown by Thomas Peters, was originally called the Province of Freedom. It was identified expressly as a settlement for the Freed Slaves from Nova Scotia. The actions which led to the bringing of these people to this new settlement culminated from a Landmark decision by Chief Justice Lord Mansfield that any slave who steps foot on the soils of England becomes a Free Man. This decision, among many others, led to the Abolition of Slavery in 1772.

History has it that Freetown was founded on the 11th of March 1792, with the first group of people who were brought here to settle, the new settlers.

The very name, Freetown became synonymous with Freedom. Free from Slavery; Free from Slave Masters; Free from Torment and Hardship in the Plantations; they became free at last. It must have been a glorious moment for our people.

Resettlement in Freetown ushered Colonialism, as Freetown and the hinterlands of modern Sierra Leone became a British colony. This colonial period of British rule was to last for one hundred and eighty nine (189) years, until April 1961, when we were granted Independence. Ten (10) years later in 1971, we attained a Republican status.

As a nation, we have gone through Trials and Tribulations. We have survived the 11 years of senseless rebel war. We have braved and survived the Ebola Scourge; we have soldiered through dare economic challenges.

Notwithstanding these challenges, we have had several glorious moments. We have reached Two Hundred and Twenty Five Years of the Founding of Freetown.

This place where we have assembled is of a special significance in our early history. We are told that when the early Settlers arrived on the shores of Freetown, at Government Wharf, they marched right up to this Historic Landmark; the Famous Cotton Tree, singing praises to God for sparing mercies and their newly founded Freedom. It must have been exciting, with the new settlers looking forward to a truly emancipated, prosperous and rewarding life.

Today, as we commemorate the Two Hundred and Twenty Fifth Anniversary of the Founding of Freetown, we thank God for his sparing mercies and faithfulness. From the tiny settlement in 1792, Freetown has grown into a city that represents Sierra Leone.

Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen, our Forefathers spread knowledge and Truth both locally and internationally. The resultant effect of the Religious Tolerance, Dignity, and Enlightenment of this Nation earned it the Nick Name of "The Athens of West Africa,"

We thank God for the existence then of people like Lord Mansfield, Grandville Sharp, Thomas Peters, William Wilberforce, Sengbeh Pieh and a host of others who fought one way or the other for the Abolition of Slavery and the Repatriation of the freed slaves.

As I understand from His Worship the Mayor of Freetown, this Two Hundred and Twenty Fifth Anniversary will be a Year-long Celebration. As we celebrate, we must continue to stand firmly for the dignity and honour of Sierra Leone, the Land that we love.

On behalf of His Excellency the President, Dr. Ernest Bai Koroma, Supreme Executive Authority of this Republic, I now officially Launch this Two Hundred and Twenty Fifth Founding of Freetown Celebrations open.

Long Live the Municipality of Freetown!

Long Live the Republic of Sierra Leone!!

May God Almighty Bless Us All.

Amb. Dr. Victor Bockarie Foh

VICE PRESIDENT

11TH March, 2017

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