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Ministry of Finance
Secretariat Building
George Street, Freetown
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MF-MPD 302/148/05

Mr. Pierre Laporte
World Bank Country Director
Ghana, Liberia, Sierra Leone
Independence Avenue
Plot 3, 10th Street
Accra, Ghana

Dear Mr. Laporte,

Mid-Term Census

This is to acknowledge with dismay receipt of your letter of 7 Dec 2021 informing Government of the World Bank's inability to provide further technical assistance nor disburse any further funds under IDA Grant No. D584-SL to support the mid-term population census following the announced inception of data collection on 10 December 2021.

It is both shocking and unfortunate that this unexpected and untimely decision is coming at the end of an intense technical engagement between the WB's technical team and Stats SL over the last fifteen months and as the training of 15,000 field staff was ending on the 8th December for their deployment to enumeration areas on the 9 December (the Census Night). You have been privy to the agreed roadmap (see attached doc for reference and records) between Stats SL, WB and UNFPA leading to the Government's timeline of 10-23 December 2021 for the enumeration. In submitting this document, the Bank's statistics advisor in Freetown Ms Elizabeth Foster clearly stated that, the Bank would no longer question Stats SL's timelines for the enumeration as long as the key issues listed in the document had been satisfactorily handled. I was reliably informed that this was confirmed by the World Bank Country Manager, Mr. Abdu Muwonge.

Furthermore, I have been informed by the Management that all technical queries from the World Bank Task Team Leader, Mr. Abdoullahi Beidou, on the Mid-Term Census were promptly and adequately responded to by Stats SL. These exchanges were copied to you as WB Country Director, as well as to the WB Country Manager. Apart from the issue of the "month of December being a festive season," we are not aware of any substantive technical issues raised by the WB Technical team that were not fully addressed by Stats SL, prior to the official announcement of the dates for the enumeration.

In this regard, the only concern raised by TTL Abdoullahi was the likelihood that the main enumeration might overlap with the festive season in December. Stats SL however reminded him that December is the traditional census month in Sierra Leone, with the most recent three censuses happening in December – 1985, 2004 and 2015. Holding the first digital census in December 2021 would enable comparability with the previous census.



In the absence of any further technical queries, Ms. Elizabeth Foster, the WB's technical adviser and sole in country assessor of Stats SL's work decided to focus on setting up a framework for monitoring data quality for the census enumeration, slated to commence on 10 December 2021.

You may wish to note that based on a multilateral arrangement, international consultants supported by the WB are on the ground assisting Stats SL with CAPI application and cartographic work until the end of the enumeration. Also United Nations Economic Commission for Africa consultants arrived in Freetown yesterday, December 8 to support the logistics and dashboard implementation for the census.

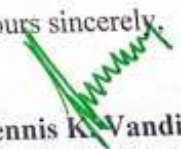
As Partners, and in my capacity as Governor to the Bank, I was expecting the Management of the Bank to have intimated me earlier on the outstanding activities on the road map agreed that Stats SL had not completed. Unfortunately, this was not the case; hence I was not in the position to assess the readiness on Stats SL to conduct the census in December, 2021. I was therefore not expecting any disruption in the provision of financial and technical support to the conduct of the mid-term census.

The untimely and unexpected withdrawal of financial and technical support to the mid-term census in the nick of time does not only undermine the credibility of the census but also the good working relationship that we have painstakingly nurtured between Stats SL and the World Bank Technical Team over the period.

In view of the foregoing, Government has unavoidably decided to carry on with the census enumeration, which starts tomorrow 10 December with the available technical support.

Going forward, we are requesting a high-level meeting with you on ways to implement the other components of the IDA Grant to avoid future misunderstanding.

Yours sincerely,



Dennis K. Vandi
Minister of Finance