



C/O

10 Nylender Street - Off Cape Road - Aberdeen - Freetown - Sierra Leone.

PRESS STATEMENT FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

29th July 2024

THEME: CIVIL SOCIETY CALLS ON THE GOVERNMENT OF SIERRA LEONE TO PUT ON HOLD THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE MANAGEMENT SERVICE AGREEMENT OVER THE COUNTRY'S MINERALS WEALTH FUND

The Natural Resource Governance and Economic Justice - Sierra Leone Network (NaRGEJ -SL) recognizes and commends the various strides of the Government of President Julius Maada Bio towards improving the governance of the Sierra Leone Minerals Sector since it came to power in April 2018. These include the conduction of the Geological Airborne Survey supported by the World Bank; launch of the three (3) Mineral Sector Policies (the 'Sierra Leone Minerals Policy', the 'Artisanal Mining Policy', and the 'Geo - Data Management Policy of Sierra Leone'); enactment of the reviewed Mines and Minerals Development Act (albeit serious weaknesses); the enactment of Customary Land Rights Act and Land Commission Acts; among other things.

However, NaRGEJ is deeply concerned and worried over the fact that the Government of Sierra Leone has signed a Management Service Agreement with **Mountview Konzem Management DMCC (MounyView)** for an initial period of 10 years, with the possibility of an extension of 5 years each, up to 20 years, without proper and adequate public consultations. The Agreement was signed in January 2023 and ratified by Parliament in April 2023. We are concerned because it is unclear to us how major processes and decisions on the sector that have long-term development impact on citizens and the State can be concluded without adequate transparency standards.

Sierra Leone, like many other African countries in the sub-region, is blessed with abundant mineral resources. The country's vast mineral resources are, however, not being exploited and utilized for the benefit of the people and the country as a whole. Mining communities are wallowing in abject poverty, characterized by poor infrastructure, appalling health and educational facilities, high level of insecurity and human right abuses.

NaRGEJ-SL, a consortium of 16 civil society and media organizations, has been following and contributing to the various processes initiated in the Minerals Sector with the hope that it will lead to more transparent, accountable and beneficial outcomes for the country and people of Sierra Leone. Unfortunately, though Civil Society acknowledges the value of establishing the much-needed Sierra

Leone Mines and Minerals Development and Management Corporation Act, the enactment of this law did not meet the transparency threshold as required by the EITI Standard.

Therefore, we the civil society organizations working on natural resource governance call on the Government of Sierra Leone to respond to the following concerns regarding the implementation of the Management Service Agreement over the country's Mineral Wealth Fund, namely:

1. How was Mountview recruited to provide management services to the Mineral Wealth Fund (MWF)?
2. Given the significance and critical nature of the assignment, did the recruitment process follow the relevant provisions of the Public Procurement Act? For example, was the contract advertised?
3. Who is the Head or Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of Mountview? Does he possess the necessary qualifications and experience to hold such a position?
4. Are there no competent Sierra Leoneans in the private sector who can hold such a position?
5. In other countries such as Ghana and Botswana the Minister of Mines takes lead in this initiative. Why in Sierra Leone is the Minister of Finance both the Chairman of the Sierra Leone Mines and Mineral Development and Management Corporation (SLMMDMC) and the MWF?
6. Did the Government of Sierra Leone through the Ministries of Mines and Finance, hold any consultations with the Civil Society, Chamber of Mines, or any other key stakeholders before enacting the Sierra Leone Mines and Mineral Development and Management Corporation Act 2023?
7. Did the Government of Sierra Leone conduct due diligence and engage other partners/management firms with proven experience, integrity, and credibility to avoid the possibilities of mismanagement and corruption? If so, the civil society is demanding access to such a report?
8. Are there established and transparent policies and goals/objectives (such as infrastructure development, stabilization, or investment for future generations) prior to the creation and launch of the MWF?
9. Are there established standard processes and procedures for how the funds/monies from the MWF will be invested and accessed and for the distribution of roles and responsibilities within the organization?
10. Based on international best practices, the MWF should be managed by an independent, highly engaged oversight board with demonstrable professional capital investment experience. This is critical for maintaining institutional integrity and enforcing clear rules about when and how the Government of Sierra Leone can request funds from the MWF. Is this the case with Sierra Leone's MWF?

In the light of the above questions, NaRGEJ-SL demands:

1. A comprehensive response to the questions above for the attention of the people of Sierra Leone and critical Stakeholders with the view to engagement to make amends.
2. That the Government of Sierra Leone put on hold with immediate effect the implementation process of the Management Service Agreement with Mountview over the handling of the country's Mineral Wealth Fund.
3. That the Sierra Leone Mines and Mineral Development and Management Corporation (SLMMDMC) Act be reviewed
4. That a copy of the Business Plan and Key Indicators to measure MountView's Performance be made available.
5. That an update report regarding the implementation of the Service Agreement which had started over a year ago be provided to the public.
6. That a copy of Mountview Business Plan that is critical for the Government of Sierra Leone to effectively track and measure MountView's performance be made available to the public.
7. That civil society and public be provided with a copy of Mountview Development Strategy and how such a document was developed.
8. That the government of Sierra Leone institute a dialogue process with all relevant stakeholders for the review of all processes, instruments and institutions leading to the proper and citizen-driven institution and management of the Mineral Wealth Fund of Sierra Leone



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About NaRGEJ

The NaRGEJ Network is a collaborative initiative of groups and individuals in Sierra Leone working to secure economic and social justice through human rights in the natural resource sector. NaRGEJ seeks to facilitate joint actions, enhancing communication and building solidarity across regions, build a national movement to make responsible natural resource governance, human rights and social justice a reality for all.