

Ambassador to Germany, Dr. Mbaimba Baryoh (also accredited to Italy & Austria), has led a delegation to Italy to explore potential investment opportunities that would help boost the economic development of Sierra Leone and also visited the prospective site of the Sierra Leone Consulate in Rome.



The delegation was cordially received by Confimpresaitalia President, Mr. Luigi Manganiello in Rome. Confimpresaitalia is a national trade union recognized by the Italian Ministry of Work and SP.

In a meeting with Confimpresaitalia, Ambassador Baryoh expressed his gratitude for

the hospitality accorded to him and his team. He discussed the challenges that Sierra Leone is facing in various sectors of the country and pointed out investment opportunities in the education, health, agriculture, tourism, infrastructure, marine and mining sectors.

Ambassador Baryoh cited the ongoing blood bank project in Freetown in the Ola During Children's Hospital in Freetown, which was initiated by the Sierra Leone consulate in Milan. He strongly urged the Rome, Naples and Milan consulates to join forces and work together to implement more development projects. He emphasized that projects of diplomatic missions must be registered and owned by the Government to protect them from attempts of corruption and theft.

He vowed to strengthen diplomatic ties with Italy and promote economic relations by providing security to Italian development investments in Sierra Leone.

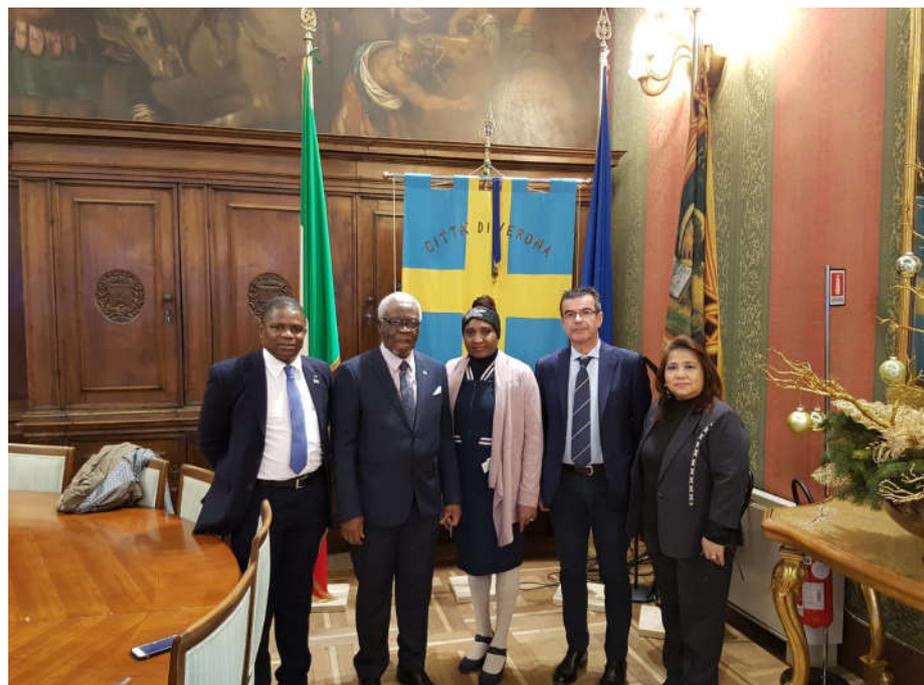
In response, Mr. Manganiello invited the Ambassador to meet with the Board of Investors of Confimpresaitalia, which consisted of more than 700 trade associations around Europe. Mr. Manganiello cited that finances should be made available and political machinery be put in place for investment projects to be realized. He assured the Ambassador of his full support. Ambassador Baryoh held meetings with trading partners and investors from the health, agriculture, digitalization, fishing and marine and building infrastructure sectors attended the meeting at the Confimpresaitalia's representation Office at Casa de Poppo in Rome, Italy. .

Ambassador reported the Government allocated 21% of the total national budget for the education sector to provide free education up to the tertiary level to stabilize democracy and build on a working middle class to support its economy. However, this effort is not enough as the rate of illiteracy in the country is now up to 60 per cent. Fish exports contribute merely a \$100million despite the big potential of the country's fishing industry. The Ambassador pointed out that the uncontrolled licenses to fish and unregistered activities in Sierra Leone's territorial waters resulted in a lot of illegal activities such as non-payment of taxes and harvesting of good seeds, which are all smuggled out of the country. The waters of Sierra Leone is without protection and investors in marine resources can facilitate legal selling and trading to benefit exporters from the country.

The agricultural sector needs investors to create a pool of technical experts who could lend share their expertise on farm machineries and technologies. Seventy percent of agricultural land is wasted. There are enormous opportunities to invest in rice farming and food processing for exportation. The Government currently gives incentives to entrepreneurs to encourage farming of rubber, cacao, sweet potatoes, and palm oil. The Ambassador also encouraged organizing mass tourism, like those being done in England, for tourists to see the beauty of a tropical country with warm weather all year round. A question and answer session climaxed the event.

MEETING WITH TRADE SECURITIES REPRESENTATIVE BASED IN LONDON

Ambassador Baryoh also held talks with Mr. Carmine Spinale a representative of Trade Securities based in London, with an office in Rome, Italy. Mr. Spinale's office manages international cooperation on trade, exports and internationalisation of enterprises. He requested for a list of priority projects approved by the Sierra Leone Government to enable him to put together a program portfolio for the Ambassador, which he could refer to during his meetings and discussions with the Rome Capital and



members of the European Parliament. The program portfolio would include how these priority projects could be financed, achieved and sustained in the long term. At present, the three main sectors of international cooperation include infrastructure or civil construction, health and agriculture. Mr. Spinale cited ongoing programs, including a model system and logistics for distribution, a modernized method of cow breeding which will positively impact milk and meat production. The cows are selected in Italy and the breeding takes place in Africa.

MEETING WITH IFAD DIRECTOR FOR WEST & CENTRAL AFRICA

Another meeting was with the Director, West and Central Africa of the International Fund for Agriculture and Development (IFAD) Mr. Lissandro Martin, who warmly welcomed Ambassador Baryoh at the Headquarters of the International Fund for Agriculture and Development (IFAD) in Rome, Italy.

Mr. Martin informed the Ambassador that he was also given the big challenge to become the Director for West and Central Africa four months ago. He said that IFAD considers West and Central Africa as significant regions under IFAD 11 which has a cycle of three years.

In Sierra Leone, there are two ongoing projects performing relatively well compared to many countries where there are problems encountered in the implementation of the project. To enhance the good performance, another project for Sierra Leone was submitted to the Executive Board to help small farmers planting palm oil.

In March 2020, there will be an Office of independent Evaluation that will analyze IFAD projects from poor countries. The Office has chosen Sierra Leone to be evaluated in 2019. Their ratings and analysis will be presented to IFAD Board on April 1, 2020 with corresponding recommendations drafted. After the evaluation, a new strategy for Sierra Leone that agrees with the priorities common between IFAD and Sierra Leone for the following three years will be implemented.

Ambassador said that the slogan of the 8 months Government is new direction, emphasizing on rural development and education and agriculture. He mentioned that a Commission of Inquiry is ongoing to investigate corruption cases in the country.

When asked by the Ambassador how people or group are selected to benefit from IFAD project, Mr. Martin replied that the country Government is responsible in selecting the people using the criteria set by IFAD Governors. IFAD does not fund directly the farmers as resources are given to

Governments. IFAD is governed by Governments and the Minister of Agriculture of Sierra Leone is part of IFAD's Governor.