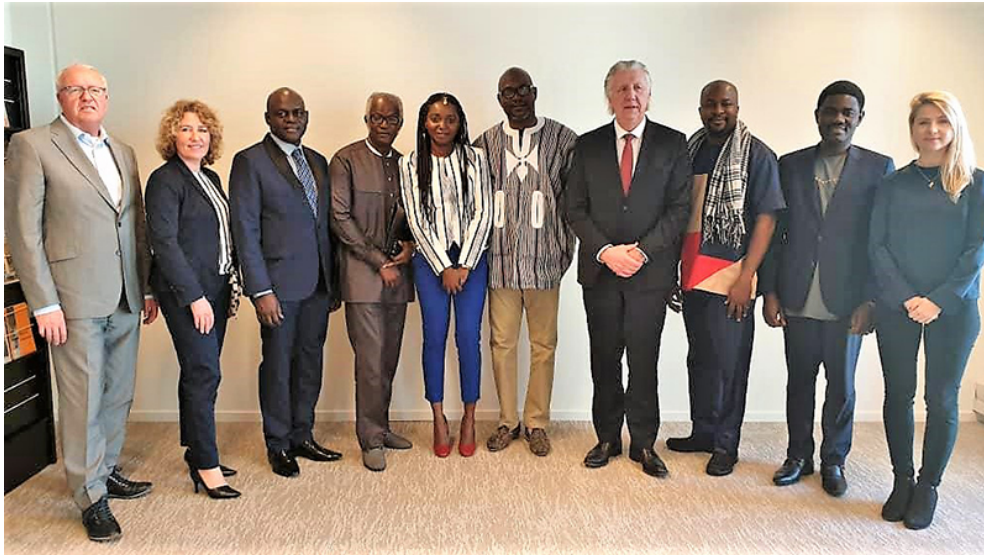


**The Hon. Minister Raymond de'Souza George has concluded a five-day business-development orientation visit to the Netherlands from 26th February to 3rd March 2019.**



An important result during this visit was the signing of an MoU between the government of Sierra Leone on one hand and OSO-Enschede and MD Consultancy, a Sierra Leonean Holland based business group that spearheaded the program on the other hand, on the 1st March, 2019 in The Netherlands. OSO-Enschede has developed Road Rapid, a specialized and sustainable product, as a solution for developing feeder roads in a cost-effective and environmentally friendly manner.

Road Rapid makes feeder roads water repellent and functions as a compacting aid with a high cementing capacity. Feeder roads treated with Road Rapid are believed to maintain stable road performance from 5 to 7 years.

Last year, in collaboration with two Sierra Leonean government agencies—Sierra Leone Road Authority (SLRA) and Road Maintenance Fund Administration (RMFA)—OSO-Enschede and MD Consultancy implemented a pilot project of 400 meters at Kabatha - Gbinti Junction, in Portloko District, Northern Province.

The results of the test after the rainy season was encouraging according to the evaluation of the road by the SLRA. Road Rapid was considered a possible option to develop the country's feeder roads and deserves further investigation. Against this background, Minister de'Souza George visited the Netherlands to meet with the OSO-Enschede management to consider

partnership possibilities to use Road Rapid on feeder roads throughout the country. This step will help open up rural areas to the market and stimulate inclusive economic growth and rural integration in the country, in line with the New Direction policy framework established and promoted by HE President Julius Maada Bio since 2018.

During their five-day program, Minister de'Souza George and his delegation also visited the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, the Netherlands Africa Business Council (NABC), and a number of companies, including SGS Intron, part of SGS, the world leading inspection, verification, testing and certification company. SGS Intron has been working with OSO-Enschede to test the economic viability of Road Rapid. The delegation also visited Oskam V/F, which has developed and manufactures small mobile machines for the production of compressed earth blocks to build comfortable houses, making use of the locally available resources.

The visit concluded with a meeting with members of the Sierra Leone Central Union (SLCU), an umbrella organisation of 14 Sierra Leonean NGOs in the Netherlands, to inform them about the government's aspirations and determination to speed up growth and development in the country and the need to join the government in the fight against corruption and the promotion of Human Capital Development.

Minister de'Souza George was impressed and indicated that his visit had created new opportunities for recognition, trade and investment opportunities between the Netherlands and Sierra Leone. The visit was facilitated by a group of Sierra Leonean diaspora members in the Netherlands.

The Minister met with the SLCU Executive for a status update, and also to seek their views, concerns prior to the meeting with the NABC and the Foreign Affairs Meetings.

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