OFFICE OF NATIONAL SECURITY

OFFICE OF NATIONAL SECURITY

ANNUAL REPORT

2024

CONTENTS

ABBREVIATIONS/ACRONYMS iii

MESSAGE FROM THE NATIONAL SECURITY COORDINATOR ix

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY..... xii

OFFICE OF NATIONAL SECURITY MANAGEMENT TEAM xiv

1.0 PROFILE OF THE OFFICE OF NATIONAL SECURITY..... 1

1.1 Introduction 1

1.2 Mission, Vision and Guiding Principles 3

1.3 Organogram of the Office of National Security..... 4

1.4 Administrative Structure of the ONS 5

2.0 SITUATIONAL ANALYSIS OF THE SECURITY LANDSCAPE IN 2024 6

2.1 Threats to Sierra Leone's National Security .....

6 2.2 Efforts to Combat Threats to Sierra Leone's National Security 10

3.0 ACCOMPLISHMENTS OF THE ONS IN 2024 10

3.1 Effective Coordination of the National Security Architecture (NSA) to Address Threats to National Security 11

3.2 Security Coordination at Provincial Level.....30

4.0 CONFLICT PREVENTION AND MANAGEMENT THROUGH THE EARLY WARNING AND EARLY RESPONSE (EWER) MECHANISM..... 36

4.1 Resolution of Conflicts between Cattle Herders and Crop Farmers.....36 4.2 Resolution of Land and Boundary Disputes .....36 4.3 Resolution of Intra- and inter-Chiefdom Conflicts .....37 4.4. Resolution of Conflicts between Mining Companies and Local Communities.....37

5.0 DEVELOPMENT AND IMPLEMENTATION OF PROTECTIVE SECURITY PROCEDURES IN GOVERNMENT MDAS AND CNI..... 38

5.1 Vulnerability and Risk Assessment of MDAs and CNI.....38

5.2 Vetting of Public Officials 38

5.3 Coordination of Protective Security at State or Public Events 38

6.0 ENHANCEMENT OF THE ONS' PRODUCTIVITY WITH IMPROVED PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT AND DELIVERY SYSTEMS 40

7.0 IMPLEMENTATION OF POLICIES AND STRATEGIES RELATING TO NATIONAL SECURITY.....
41

8.0 REGULATION OF PRIVATE SECURITY COMPANIES..... 41

9.0 STRENGTHENING STRATEGIC COMMUNICATIONS CAPABILITIES OF THE ONS 43

9.1 Forestalling Attempts to Use the Social Media to Undermine the Security Sector and National Security 43

9.2 Enhancing Public Awareness of Security Sector Activities through the ONS Website and Social Media Handles 43

10.0 COORDINATION OF EFFORTS TO MAINSTREAM GENDER WITHIN THE SECURITY SECTOR .....
44

11.0 MOBILIZATION OF FUNDS FOR SECTOR-WIDE OPERATIONS.....

45 12.0 CRITICAL CHALLENGES .....

46 12.1 Non-completion of the ONS Car Park
.....46 12.2 Delay in Release of Quarterly
Allocations.....46 12.3 Limited Capacity Building
Opportunities.....46 12.4 Inadequate and Aging
Fleet.....46 12.5 Lack of
Owned-accommodation for ONS Security Coordinators .....47 12.6 Limited
Security Coordination at Chiefdom Level.....47 12.7 Lack of
Timely Response to Early Warning Signals by MDAs 47 13.0
STRATEGIC FOCUS FOR 2025 48
14.0 CONCLUSION..... 49

ABBREVIATIONS/ACRONYMS

API - Advance Passenger Information

AU - African Union

BSC - Border Security Coordination

BSL - Bank of Sierra Leone

BRCC - Business Regulation Coordination Committee CEOs -

Chief Executive Officers

CHISEC - Chiefdom Security Committee

CISA - Central Intelligence and Security Agency CMCU -

Combined Maritime Control Unit

CNI - Critical National Infrastructure

CoS - Chief of Staff

CPD - Continuous Professional Development CSOs - Civil

Society Organisations

CTC - Counter-Terrorism Committee

DISEC - District Security Committee

DNSCoord - Deputy National Security Coordinator ECOWAS -

Economic Community of West African States ECSL - Electoral

Commission for Sierra Leone EDSA - Electricity Distribution and Supply

Authority EGTC - Electricity Generation and Transmission Company

EMBs - Election Management Bodies

EPA - Environmental Protection Agency EEZ -

Exclusive Economic Zone

EWER - Early Warning and Early Response FIA -

Financial Intelligence Agency

FCS - Finance and Corporate Service FCPs -

Forward Control Points

FNA - Freetown International Airport GAF - Guinea

Armed Forces

GAD - Gender Affairs Directorate

GoSL - Government of Sierra Leone

HRM - Human Resource Management IAU -

Internal Audit Unit

ICT - Information and Communications Technology ICCs - Incident

Command Centres

INTERPOL - International Police Criminal Organizations IIG -

Integrated Intelligence Group IEZ - Inshore Exclusion Zone

JCC - Joint Coordination Centre

JCTU - - Joint Counter-Terrorism Unit

JIC - Joint Intelligence Committee

JMC - Joint Maritime Committee

JMCU - Joint Maritime Control Unit

JMCSG - Joint Maritime Committee Steering Group JPGF -

Joint Presidential Guard Force M&E - Monitoring and

Evaluation

MACA - Military Aid to Civil Authority MAOC - Maritime

Analysis and Operations Centre MIU - Maritime Intelligence

Unit

MFMR - Ministry of Fisheries and Marine Resources MAC-P -

Military Aid to Civil Power

MDAs - Ministries, Departments, and Agencies

MoF - Ministry of Finance

MoJ - Ministry of Justice

MoFAIC - Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation MoU -

Memorandum of Understanding

MRU - Mano River Union

MTEF - Medium Term Expenditure Framework

MTSP - Medium Term Strategic Plan

MTNDP - Medium-Term National Development Plan NaCCED - National Council for Civic Education and Democracy NaSCIA - National Security and Central Intelligence Act NSA - National Security Architecture

NCCC - National Counter-Terrorism Coordination Committee NIB - National Investment Board

NDMA - National Disaster Management Agency

NDLEA - National Drug Law Enforcement Agency NFF - National Fire Force

NIRs - National Intelligence Requirements

NJOC - National Joint Operations Centre

NNASSP - National Needs Assessment for Security Sector Preparedness NPSF - National Protective Security Framework

NRA - National Revenue Authority

NSC - National Security Council

NCSCC - National Cyber Security Coordination Centre NSCCG - National Security Council Coordinating Group NSPS - National Security Policy and Strategy

NSR - National Situation Room

NTA - National Threat Assessment

NVP-SL - National Vetting Policy of Sierra Leone

ONS - Office of National Security

PC - Paramount Chief

PNR - Passenger Name Record

PPRC - Political Parties Regulation Commission

PROSEC - Provincial Security Committee

PRA - Petroleum Regulatory Agency

PSC - Private Security Companies

PSR - Private Security Regulations

RSLAF - Republic of Sierra Leone Armed Forces

SCU - Strategic Communications Unit

SDMC - Sierra Diamond Mining Company

SEACOP - Seaport Cooperation Project

SLBC - Sierra Leone Broadcasting Corporation

SLCADR - Sierra Leone Civil Aviation Drone Regulations SLCS -

Sierra Leone Correctional Service

SLCSIP - Sierra Leone Counter-Terrorism Strategic Implementation Plan

SLeCAA - Sierra Leone Commission on Arms and Ammunition SLMPS -

Sierra Leone Maritime Policy and Strategy SLMA - Sierra Leone Maritime

Administration

SLPHA - Sierra Leone Ports and Harbours Authority SLP -

Sierra Leone Police

SLID - Sierra Leone Immigration Department

SOC - Serious Organized Crime

SOP - Standard Operating Procedure

SRGNSA - Standard Response Guidelines for the National Security Architecture

SSG - Strategic Situation Group

SSSCG - Security Sector Strategic Communication Group TaCoS -

Terms and Conditions of Service

TOCU - Transnational Organized Crime Unit

TWT - Technical Working Team

TWG - Technical Working Group

UN - United Nations

UNODC - United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime VaPS - Vetting and Protective Security

WAPNP - Western Area Peninsular National Park

WA-IWG - West Africa Internal Working Group

His Excellency the President, Brig. (Rtd.) Dr. Julius Maada Bio
Chairman, National Security Council (NSC)

MESSAGE FROM THE NATIONAL SECURITY COORDINATOR

As we conclude another year of growth, resilience, and achievement, I am profoundly honoured to present the Office of National Security (ONS) Annual Report for 2024. This report reflects our collective efforts to safeguard the security and stability of Sierra Leone. The year 2024 brought both challenges and opportunities, reinforcing the importance of our mission to protect lives, maintain peace, and uphold the rule of law.

The year 2024 was both eventful and transformative, marked by significant milestones in strengthening Sierra Leone's security framework, ensuring the safety of our citizens, and laying the foundation for future socio-economic growth. The achievements detailed in this report are not solely the result of the ONS but are the product of collaborative efforts involving government stakeholders at the national level, international partners and local communities.

As we reflect on the year, it is crucial to recognize the challenges and opportunities 2024 presented. These challenges required vigilance, rapid responses, and a commitment to long-term solutions aimed at safeguarding our nation's stability amid evolving security threats. Throughout the year, the ONS remained steadfast in its core responsibilities: ensuring national security, enabling socio-economic development, and protecting the integrity of the state. These principles guided our actions and decisions, enabling us to navigate a complex security landscape effectively.

The rapidly changing global security environment made 2024 a pivotal year for the ONS. Sierra Leone faced increasingly diverse and complex security threats, ranging from social unrest and political instability to transnational organized crime, terrorism, and cyber threats. In response, the ONS worked tirelessly to maintain security and peace. We focused on strengthening the National Security Architecture (NSA) by collaborating with government agencies, security forces, and international partners. This multi-pronged approach allowed us to tackle critical issues, including mitigating social unrest, combating transnational organized crime, safeguarding national infrastructure, and enhancing counterterrorism efforts.

One of the most significant challenges in 2024 was the risk of social unrest, driven by economic hardship, political tensions, substance abuse, and subversion threats. In response, the ONS collaborated with community leaders, civil society organizations, and government ministries to address the root causes of these tensions. We emphasized dialogue, peacebuilding, and conflict resolution, ensuring citizens'

concerns were heard and addressed constructively. This approach helped prevent

potential unrest from escalating into larger conflicts, contributing to the nation's overall stability.

Simultaneously, we intensified efforts to combat transnational organized crime, which poses a severe threat to Sierra Leone's security. The ONS partnered with international law enforcement agencies such as INTERPOL, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), European Union (EU), and ECOWAS to enhance Sierra Leone's capacity to combat drug trafficking, human trafficking, and other illicit activities. By improving intelligence-sharing mechanisms, bolstering border security, and providing targeted training for law enforcement personnel, we dismantled several criminal networks operating within and across our borders, significantly reducing criminal activity in the region.

Another critical priority for the ONS was protecting Sierra Leone's critical infrastructure. With ongoing economic growth, the security of vital assets such as energy plants, transportation networks, and communication systems has become increasingly important. In 2024, we enhanced the capacity of security forces to safeguard these assets against physical and cyber threats. Furthermore, we collaborated with private sector partners to develop and implement robust cybersecurity frameworks, ensuring the protection of Sierra Leone's digital infrastructure against growing cyber risks.

While Sierra Leone has largely been insulated from major terrorist threats, the global rise of extremist ideologies highlights the need for constant vigilance. The ONS maintained close partnerships with regional and international counterterrorism bodies to monitor emerging threats and develop preventive measures. Strengthening our national intelligence services also played a crucial role in identifying and neutralizing potential security risks before escalation.

Recognizing the importance of partnerships, the ONS prioritized collaboration with government ministries, security agencies, civil society organizations, international partners, and the private sector. These partnerships enabled us to respond effectively to security challenges, share resources and intelligence, and develop innovative solutions to complex problems.

Community engagement was another area of focus. Effective security is built on trust, and we emphasized community-based security initiatives. By fostering open communication between security agencies and local communities, we built greater

public confidence in the security sector and improved our ability to address local concerns.

Looking ahead to 2025, the ONS remains committed to ensuring a peaceful, secure, and resilient Sierra Leone. While significant progress was made in 2024, considerable challenges lie ahead. As Sierra Leone increasingly embraces the digital age, the ONS will prioritize strengthening cybersecurity infrastructure. This will include developing robust frameworks to protect critical information systems and promoting public-private partnerships to combat cyber threats.

Additionally, as the impacts of climate change become undeniable, the ONS will integrate climate resilience into security strategies. This ensures Sierra Leone is prepared to address the security implications of climate change, including food insecurity, migration, and potential resource-related conflicts.

Strengthening border security and migration management systems will also be a priority in 2025. With regional instability and increasing migration pressures, it is essential for Sierra Leone to secure its borders while maintaining its commitment to providing sanctuary to those in need.

I extend my heartfelt gratitude to all our partners, stakeholders, and the people of Sierra Leone for their unwavering support throughout 2024. Your dedication to national security has been instrumental in our successes. As we look ahead to 2025 and beyond, let us continue working together to safeguard the peace, security, and prosperity of our nation. Through unity, determination, and faith, we will continue building a secure and prosperous future for all Sierra Leoneans.

ABDULAI CAULKER

NATIONAL SECURITY COORDINATOR

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The 2024 Annual Report of the ONS highlights its unwavering commitment to safeguarding Sierra Leone's sovereignty, promoting peace and stability, and addressing emerging threats through coordinated and proactive measures in an increasingly complex security landscape.

As the lead institution for security sector coordination, the ONS is tasked with protecting Sierra Leone against diverse threats, including armed conflicts, terrorism, cyber threats, and organized crime. Central to its operations are the core values of professionalism, integrity, transparency, and accountability, which underpin its efforts to build public trust and ensure an effective security apparatus.

Key Achievements in 2024

1. Enhanced Security Architecture
    - Strengthened operationalization of the Early Warning and Early Response (EWER) mechanism to monitor and mitigate potential threats such as political tensions and social unrest.
    - Successfully coordinated security for major national events, ensuring public safety through inter-agency collaboration with the Sierra Leone Police (SLP), Republic of Sierra Leone Armed Forces (RSLAF), and other stakeholders.
2. Conflict Resolution and Community Stability
    - Facilitated the resolution of localized disputes in districts and chiefdoms, preventing potential escalations and reinforcing peace at the community level.
3. Combating Organized Crime

- Advanced the Seaport Cooperation Project (SEACOP) to bolster maritime security against drug trafficking, illegal fishing, and other illicit activities, enhancing Sierra Leone's regional cooperation in the Gulf of Guinea.
- Strengthened collaboration with the Transnational Organized Crime Unit (TOCU) to combat cross-border trafficking and other transnational crimes, disrupting criminal networks and improving regional stability.

4. Policy Development and Legal Frameworks

- Reviewed and updated key security frameworks, including the Counter-Terrorism Strategy and Implementation Plan and finalized the Counter-Terrorism Bill.
- Launched the National Security Policy and Strategy (NSPS), outlining a comprehensive approach to national security with a focus on defence, intelligence, and crisis management.

5. Improved Governance and Oversight

- Coordinated the development of a Standard Operating Procedure for Financial Services Oversight, addressing regulatory gaps among agencies such as the National Investment Board (NIB), Bank of Sierra Leone (BSL), and Financial Intelligence Agency (FIA).

Challenges and Future Outlook

Despite notable progress, the ONS faced challenges, including funding limitations and inadequate infrastructure, which constrained its ability to implement initiatives effectively. Addressing these constraints remains a priority as the ONS continues to advance its mission.

Looking ahead, the ONS is committed to:

- Strengthening collaboration with Ministries, Departments, and Agencies (MDAs) to integrate security into national development priorities.
- Enhancing public trust through improved transparency, accountability, and communication.
- Expanding community engagement and fostering partnerships with civil society

and the media to reinforce collective ownership of national security efforts.

The ONS remains steadfast in its dedication to ensuring Sierra Leone's security, stability, and prosperity in the face of evolving challenges.

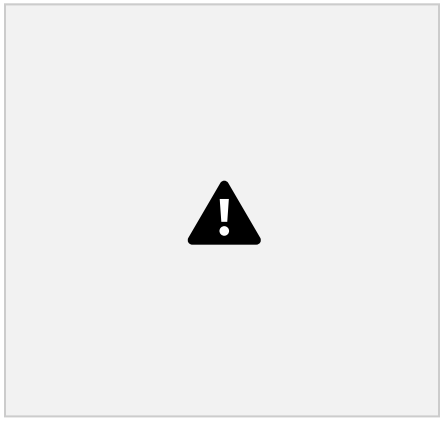
OFFICE OF NATIONAL SECURITY MANAGEMENT TEAM

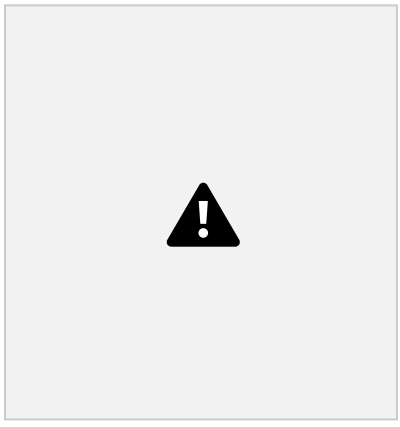
Abdulai Caulker
National Security Coordinator

Dr. Ahmed A. Sannoh
Deputy National Security Coordinator

Francis Langumba Keili
Chief of Staff

Alhaji Morlai Kargbo
Principal Director





Alpheus F. Kamara **Director, Human Resource** **Mohamed B. Bangura**

Director, Provincial & Border Security

Abdul Karim Will
Director, Strategic Communications

Umaru Tarawally
Director, Research & Assessment

Director, Serious Organized Crime Coordination & Counter-Terrorism

Nathania O.V.O Thomas-Farboh
Director, Finance & Corporate Services

Shek A. Bah

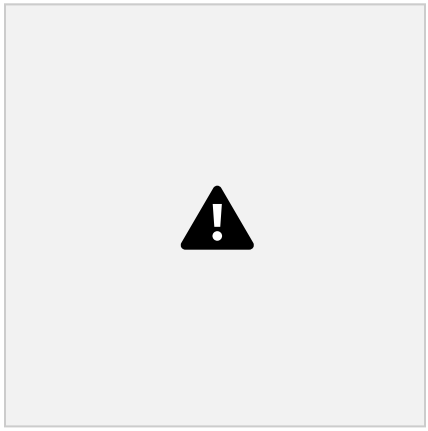
Lismond T. C. Jones Esq. **Director, Planning & Inter-Agency Relations**

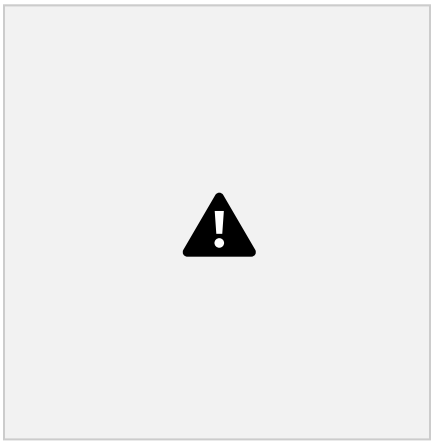
Director, Monitoring & Evaluation

Gender Affairs

Osman Conteh

Sia Alhassan-Kabia **Director,**





Nabie Kamara
Ag. Director, Vetting & Protective Security

Patrick N. Johnny
Coordinator, Strategic Programmes and Financial Compliance

1.0 PROFILE OF THE OFFICE OF NATIONAL SECURITY

1.1 Introduction

The National Security and Central Intelligence Act, (NaSCIA*)* 2023 which repealed and replaced the NaSCIA 2002 established the ONS as the Secretariat of the National Security Council (NSC). The ONS coordinates the security sector and advises the President and the Government on all matters relating to the security of Sierra Leone.

The ONS also interfaces between the security sector, ministries, departments and agencies (MDAs) and civil society by creating the space to harness the views and participation of the public in security and governance discourse, hence promoting

inclusive security.

In addition to its advisory and coordination roles, the NaSCIA, 2023 also mandates the ONS to:

a. provide support and secretarial services to the NSC;
b. coordinate intelligence at national, provincial, district and chiefdom levels; c. establish clear lines of communication between the security services and provide for the mediation of disputes between them;
d. maintain cordial and cooperative relationship between the security sector and the public;
e. prepare and ensure the implementation of national security policies and strategies;
f. supervise security vetting and investigations for security clearance of persons who:
    i) hold or may hold vettable post in government departments, ministries and agencies;
    ii) may have access to sensitive or classified information, so as to ensure uniform vetting standard throughout government;
g. develop and implement protective security procedures in government departments, ministries and agencies to ensure uniform security standards throughout government;
h. work in collaboration with ministries, departments and agencies to provide the enabling environment for good governance, socio-economic development, poverty reduction and conflict prevention and management;

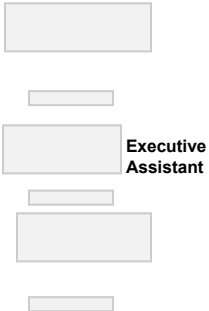
i. ensure effective leadership and support for the proper functioning of the National Security Council subcommittees;
j. ensure the proper protection of the state's critical national infrastructure; and k. make regulations to regulate private security companies.

1.2 Mission, Vision and Guiding Principles

independent

independent and democratic

1.3 Organogram of the Office of National Security



Procurement Unit **Internal Audit and Risk Management Unit**

Planning & Strategic Communication Department

Early Warning & Assessment Department

Finance & Administration Department

Planning & Inter
Vetting &
Strategic Comm& Info
Provincial & Border
Research &
Serious Organised
Human Resource
Gender Affairs
Monitoring & Evaluation

Agency Directorate
Protective Security Directorate
Tech Directorate
Security Directorate
Assessment Directorate
Crime Directorate
Finance & Corporate Service Directorate
Management Directorate
Directorate
Directorate

Planning &
Public
Decentralised Security
Domestic Organised
Personnel &
M&E of ONS

Research

Inter-Agency Affairs

Vetting

Protective Security

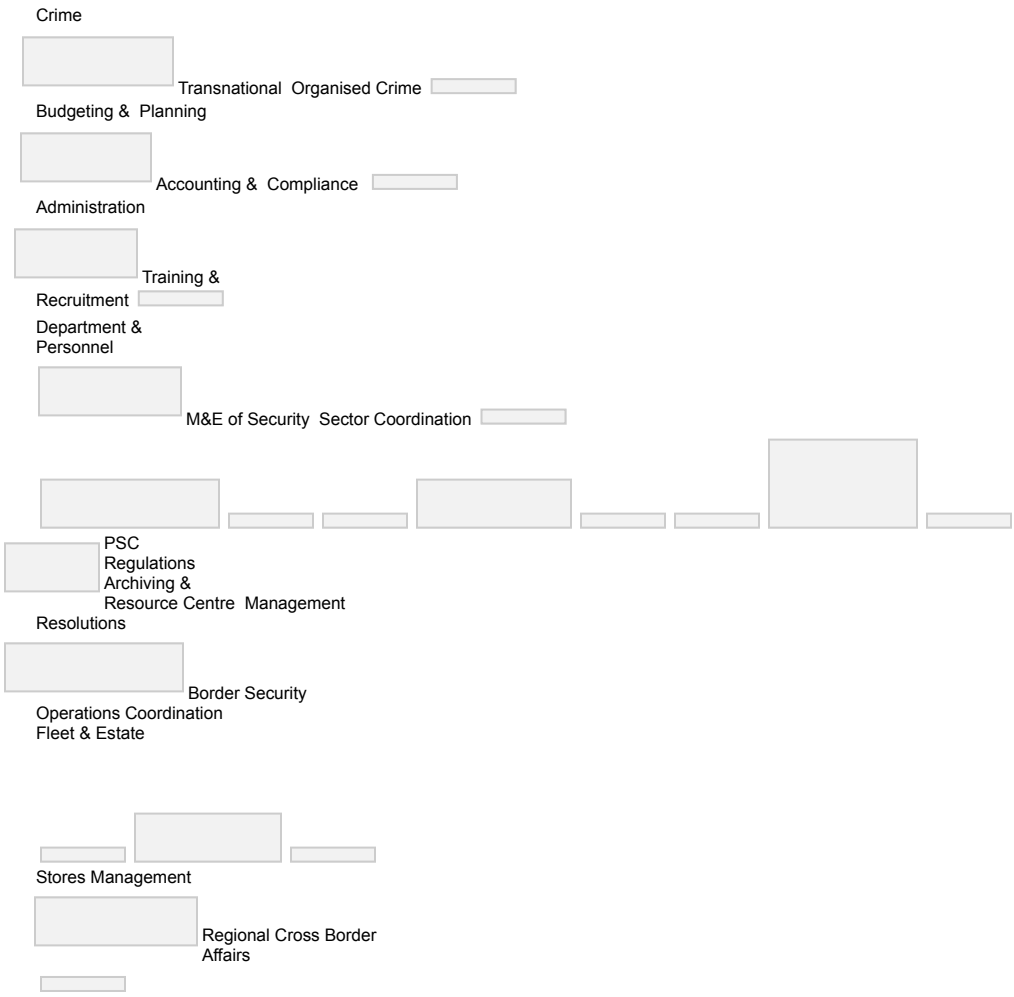
Relations ICT

Coordination

Emergency Response Coordination Liaison

Conflict Management
Intell Analysis & Coordination

Secretariat Support to JIC & Platinum Committees



1.4 Administrative Structure of the ONS

The Office of National Security (ONS) plays a critical role in maintaining a secure and stable environment by coordinating the security sector and advising the President and Government on national security matters. As outlined in **Section 24(1)** of **The National Security and Central Intelligence Act, 2023**, the ONS also serves as the secretariat to the National Security Council (NSC). The ONS achieves its mandate through several specialized directorates and/or departments:

1.4.1 Office of the National Security Coordinator (ONSC): This is the policy hub of the Office of National Security (ONS), led by the National Security Coordinator who is supported by the Deputy National Security Coordinator, and the Chief of Staff

1.4.2 Research and Assessment Directorate (RAD): Tasked with the collection and analysis of critical data to assess and estimate potential threats, both localized and national, ensuring timely and accurate reporting to His Excellency and the government for informed decision-making. It also manages the National Situation Room and supports the National Disaster Management Agency.

1.4.3 Finance and Corporate Service (FCS): This directorate manages funds, audits accounts, and handles legal and asset management issues within the ONS.

1.4.4 Planning and Inter-Agency Relations Directorate (PIAR): Focuses on developing ONS strategic plans, leading national security research, and fostering partnerships with donors and stakeholders.

1.4.5 Human Resource Management Directorate (HRM): Handles personnel recruitment, training, welfare, and vetting to ensure a professional and capable workforce.

1.4.6 Serious Organized Crime and Counter-Terrorism Coordination Directorate (SOC&CTC): Coordinates efforts to combat serious organized crime and terrorism, facilitates intelligence-led operations, and engages with international partners.

1.4.7 Provincial and Border Security Directorate (PBS): Strengthens decentralized security mechanisms, manages border security policies, and resolves regional conflicts.

1.4.8 Vetting and Protective Security Directorate (VAPS): Regulates private security companies, ensures protective security measures for critical national infrastructure, and develops national vetting policies.

1.4.9 Monitoring and Evaluation Directorate (M&E): Evaluates the performance of ONS and its coordinated programmes, ensuring accountability and alignment with national security objectives.

1.4.10 Strategic Communications Directorate (STRATCOM): Manages communication strategies, maintains the ONS website, and oversees ICT operations to enhance public and inter-agency information flow.

1.4.11 Gender Affairs Directorate (GAD): The Gender Affairs Directorate ensures gender equality, prevents discrimination, promotes parity in activities, and aligns with the ONS Gender Equality Clause while fostering partnerships in the security sector

1.4.12 Internal Audit and Risk Management Unit: Ensures financial accuracy, manages risks, enforces compliance, investigates fraud, promotes ethics, and addresses audit issues while aligning policies with government laid down policies and standards.

2.0 SITUATIONAL ANALYSIS OF THE SECURITY LANDSCAPE IN 2024

The security landscape of Sierra Leone in 2024 remained generally peaceful and stable. The country did not experience any serious threat to national security. Hence, it maintained a Level One security classification indicating that there was no immediate threat to national security. However, the security sector continued to be seized with the aftermath of the November 26th 2023 failed coup particularly with trying to establish the whereabouts of the remnant of the escapees from the Sierra Leone Correctional Centre at Pademba Road. In that regard, the security sector intensified intelligence collection to establish their whereabouts and also built a cooperative relationship with the security and intelligence services in the Mano River Union (MRU) countries, with a view to providing mutual support and assistance to prevent the hosting of dissidents. Previously, some of the dissidents were brought to Sierra Leone from Guinea.

2.1 Threats to Sierra Leone's National Security

The nature and characteristics of the threats to the security of Sierra Leone have been evolving since the end of the Civil War in 2002. There has been a shift of focus from physical security to human security. Hence, the present threats that the country faces are

mostly related to human security. In 2024, the security sector in collaboration with the pertinent MDAs had the arduous task to address the following threats to national security:

Public Order and Social Issues

- Subversion
- Strike actions and demonstrations
- Student/pupil violence
- Incidents involving commercial motorbike riders
- Excesses of secret societies
- Land/boundary/border disputes
- Morale and productivity challenges within security sector institutions
- Lawlessness and indiscipline
- Involvement of ex-service personnel in public disorder/subversion
- Unemployment/underemployment
- Access to justice challenges
- Confrontation between crop farmers and cattle herders
- Religious intolerance
- Misuse of social media to undermine state security

Organized Crime

- Corruption
- Human trafficking/people smuggling
- Trafficking/ illegal possession of sma
- Cultivation/trafficking/manufacturing

Robbery

- Smuggling of precious minerals/ess

Illegal immigration /acquisition of Sier documents

- Counterfeiting of national currency, other items
- Money laundering
- Activities of fraudsters (419ers)
- Cyber crime
- Acts of sabotage/undermining devel projects/programmes

Health and Environmental Issues

- Health care service delivery challenges
- Sale and consumption of fake, contaminated or expired medical products and foodstuff
- Disasters
- Fire hazards
- Deforestation
- Pollution
- Recycling of expired food items

Maritime Security

- Piracy/robbery at sea
- Misuse of Sierra Leone's Flag of Co
- Oil bunkering
- Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated
- Dumping of toxic waste

Political Issues

- Election violence and political intole
- Use of marshals/thugs by political p

Economic Security	Border Security Challenges
- Hoarding	- Encroachment and occupation of Si
- Inflation	- Cross-border criminality
- Illicit Mining	- Border porosity

Figure 2: National Security Threats

2.2 Efforts to Combat Threats to Sierra Leone's National Security

The security sector, in collaboration with the relevant authorities has been working assiduously towards addressing these threats. Key efforts are the mounting of sustained intelligence collection to inform operations geared towards addressing public disorder, criminality, lawlessness and indiscipline, and politically motivated violence. Relating to hate speech, tribal diatribes and inciteful publications, the security sector strategic communications outfits continue to conduct public sensitisations through robust media engagements, sometimes issuing rejoinders to clarify the misleading information put out to the public through social media. Structures such as the transnational organised crime framework and the Seaport Cooperation Project are actively involved in countering land based and maritime-based organized criminal activities respectively. In the area of counterterrorism, efforts are at an advanced stage to finalize the counterterrorism legislation. Already, the review of the National Counterterrorism Strategy has been completed. The implementation of the National Security Policy and Strategy (NSPS) which was launched by His Excellency the President, Brig. (Rtd.) Dr. Brigadier Julius Maada Bio on 8th July, 2024 has commenced in addition to the implementation of the United Nations Counter Terrorism Travel Programme [in accordance with Security Council Resolutions 2178 (2014), 2396 (2017), and 2482 (2019)], which aims at tracking the movement of suspected terrorists.

The Government of Sierra Leone continues to push forward diplomatic options aimed at

amicably resolving Guinean encroachment and occupation of Sierra Leone's territory at Yenga and other places.

3.0 ACCOMPLISHMENTS OF THE ONS IN 2024

In its quest to strengthen peace, security and stability in the country, the ONS made the Early Warning and Early Response (EWER) mechanism more robust and responsive to threats to national security through the effective operation of the National Security Architecture (NSA). The Provincial, District, and Chiefdom Security Committees (PROSECs/DISECs/CHISECs) were effectively utilized to address human security challenges that affected peace, security and stability in local communities. The ONS made the following achievements in 2024:

3.1 Effective Coordination of the National Security Architecture (NSA) to Address Threats to National Security

The National Security Architecture (NSA) is the blueprint for security sector coordination in Sierra Leone. The ONS coordinated the security sector institutions within the NSA that ensured a joint-up approach to address critical issues that affected national security. The ONS coordinated the NSA at two (2) levels: a) National Level and b) Provincial Level.

3.1.1 National Level Security Coordination

At the national level, the ONS coordinated the activities of the NSC, NSCCG, JIC, JMCSG, TOCU and CTCC working in collaboration with other pertinent MDAs to create a safe and secure environment for the implementation of the Government's development agenda as encapsulated in the Medium-Term National Development Plan (MTNDP) 2024-2030.

In 2024, the ONS coordinated 110 (94.8%) national level security committee meetings out of the 116 expected meetings (excepting CTCC which meets as and when necessary). The committees also held 4 emergency/outreach meetings as shown in the table below:

Committee	Expected Number of Meetings	Actual Number of Meetings Held			Number of Emergency/ Outreach Meetings
		Number	Percenta		

			ge (%)		
NSC	04	03	75		-
NSCCG	26	25	96		3
JIC	52	52	100		-
JMCSG	18	13	72		-
TOCU-AB	4	4	100		1
TOCU-MB	12	12	100		
CTCC	-	01	-		-
TOTAL	**116**	**110**	**94.8**		**04**

Figure 3: Table showing Expected number of meetings and actual meetings held at national level

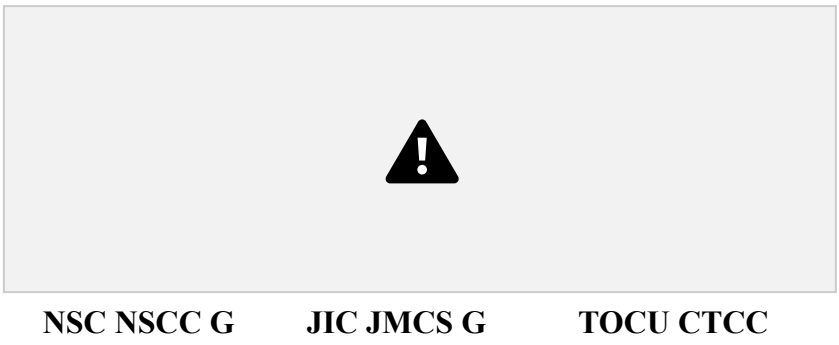


Figure 4: Percentages of meetings held by the NSC and its sub-committees at national level

Through the effective coordination of the NSA, the ONS was able to accomplish the following successes:

3.1.1.1 Coordinated the Development and Launch of the National Security

Policy and Strategy (NSPS) of Sierra Leone 2024

In accordance with its mandate to "prepare and ensure the implementation of national security policies and strategies", the ONS led the development of the first ever National Security Policy and Strategy (NSPS) of Sierra Leone through a sector-wide consultative and participatory process. The NSPS is a strategic framework and guide designed to ensure that Sierra Leone is prepared for, and can respond to current and future threats. The document adopts an integrated approach to security and employs a model that can adapt to changing circumstances over time.

On Thursday 8th August, 2024 the President of the Republic of Sierra Leone and Chairman of the NSC, Brig. (Rtd.) Dr. Julius Maada Bio officially launched the first-ever National Security Policy and Strategy (NSPS) of Sierra Leone. The launching program brought together high-level personalities in society, including government ministers, parliamentarians, the diplomatic community and

international partners, heads of relevant government ministries, departments and agencies (MDAs), heads of security institutions, traditional leaders, civil society, the media and other distinguished guests.

In launching the document, the President stated that "Ensuring the safety and security of the nation and its citizens is the first duty of every Government and my Government takes that duty seriously. Although the nature of the threats may vary from time to time, our commitment to fulfilling this sacred duty has never changed." He further noted that in an increasingly complex global environment, the challenges to national security had become multifaceted and dynamic. He described the NSPS as a robust framework to address those challenges holistically, ensuring a secured and peaceful Sierra Leone.

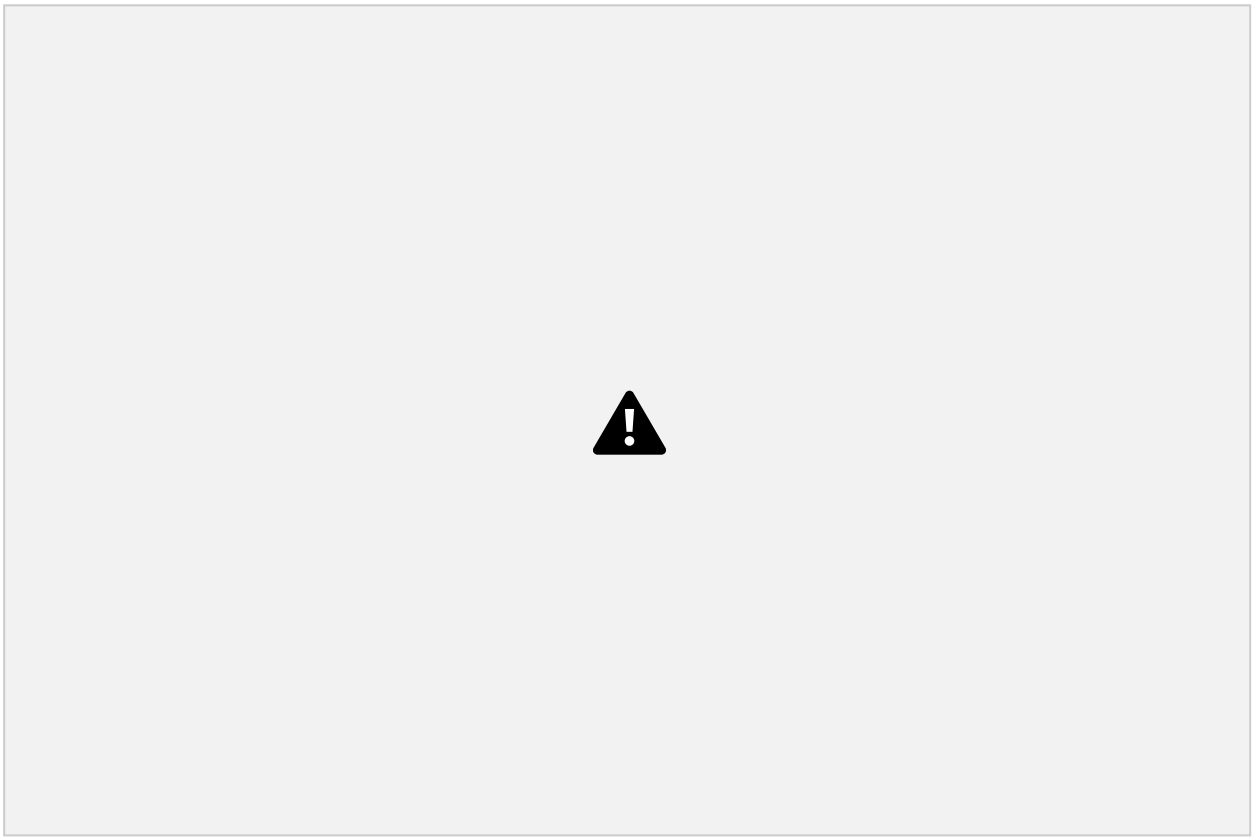


Figure 5: Launch of the National Security Policy and Strategy of Sierra Leone by H.E President Brig. (Rtd) Dr. Julius Maada Bio

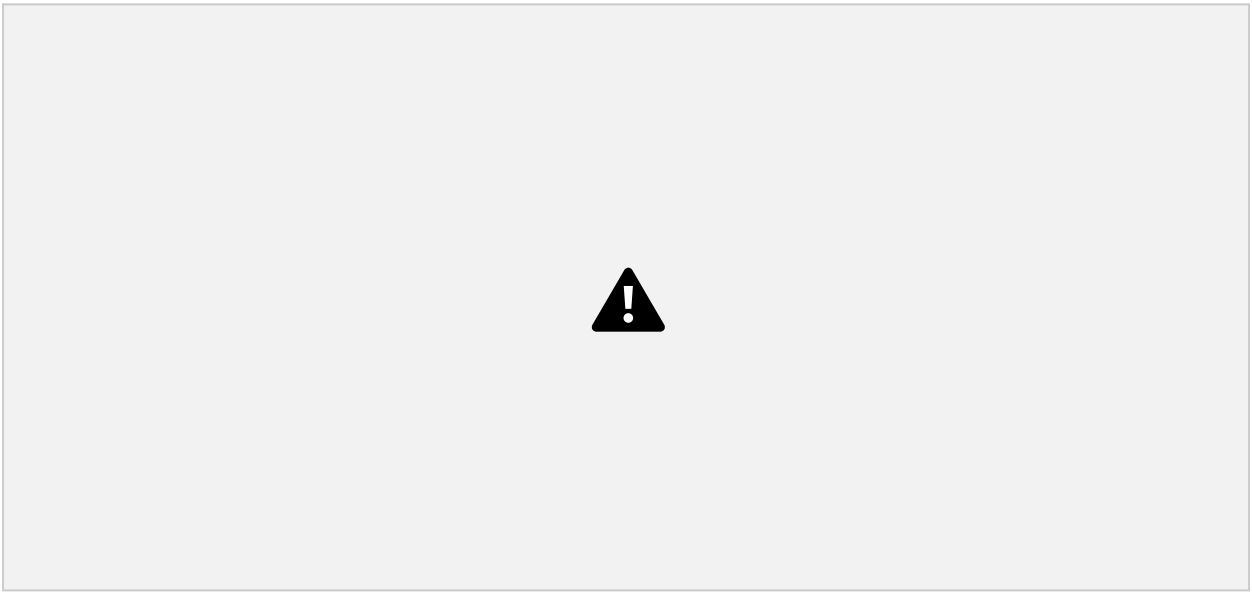


Figure 6: Stakeholders at the launching of the National Security Policy and Strategy of Sierra Leone

3.1.1.2 Conducted Security Sector Study Day to make the NSA more Robust and Responsive to National Security Threats

The security sector experienced very serious challenges to coordinate the response to the failed November 26th, 2023 coup. The National Security Architecture was not as robust and responsive as expected. Hence the need for the security sector to do some stock taking and recalibrate the response mechanism within the NSA. The ONS therefore coordinated a Security Sector Study Day on the 5th and 6th July, 2024.

The Security Sector Study Day which was themed, “Enhancing National Security Through a Highly Professional and Well-Coordinated Security Sector” focused on the National Security Architecture, with main emphasis on the Standard Response Guidelines, which stipulates the principles of security actions interwoven with the management and operationalization of intelligence to meet a desired end state.

The objectives of the Study were to:

i. enhance a clear understanding of all sector players of their respective roles and entry points as prescribed by the Standard Response Guidelines of the National Security Architecture (SRGNSA)

ii. identify prospects/opportunities for better cooperation and collaboration among sector institutions, and

iii. identify opportunities for improved security and intelligence coordination. Key outcomes of the Study Day include:

i. addressing the ineffectiveness of the Joint Coordination Centre/National Joint Operation Centre (ICC/NJOC), Incident Command Centres (ICCs) and Forward Control Points (FCPs) which are pivotal to the efficient operationalization of intelligence and national security requirements;

ii. reviewing the *Military Aid to Civil Authority (MACA)* with main focus on the Military Aid to Civil Power (MACP), and encouraging the SLP to adopt a strategy that can enhance the professionalism of its armed wing, so that even when the RSLAF deploys on an emergency MACP task, the operational and command responsibilities of the SLP remain robust;

iii. reviewing the *Standard Response Guidelines for the National Security Architecture* with a view to incorporating new security dynamics, and taking

concrete action to popularize it in all security sector institutions. This will be achieved by the imperative action of including it in the institutions' respective training doctrines;

iv. strong admonition of members of the NSCCG and other NSC sub-committees who do not regularly attend meetings (PROSECs and DISECs in particular), and hence stall the effectiveness and decision-making process of those committees in resolving localized conflicts; and

v. encouraging GoSL to consider a predictable funding support (advisedly ring fenced) to JCC/NJOC and its affiliate bodies, and for Emergency MACP operations.

The following topics were presented to stakeholders for discussion:

i) Standard Response Guidelines for Sierra Leone's National Security Architecture

ii) Security Coordination within the Context of Early Warning and Early Response Mechanism

iii) Intelligence Collection and Processing

iv) Operationalization of Intelligence and Security Information

v) Military Aid to Civil Authority, and

vi) Regional Security Perspective

At the conclusion of the Study Day, the following recommendations were made and stakeholders were requested to ensure the full implementation of the recommendations:

i) Immediately address the ineffectiveness of the JCC/NJOC/ICCs/FCPs to ensure timely operationalization of intelligence and security information;

ii) Review key security documents/policies to address implementation bottlenecks and developments that have taken place on the security landscape;

iii) Take immediate and concrete steps to address the myriad of problems at the Sierra Leone Correctional Service (SLCS) to prevent reoccurrence of jail breaks;

iv) Address the issues affecting the effectiveness of the decentralized committees;

v) Undertake capacity building for the primary security forces to close the knowledge gap among the strategic, operational and tactical levels; and

vi) Improve welfare of serving personnel.

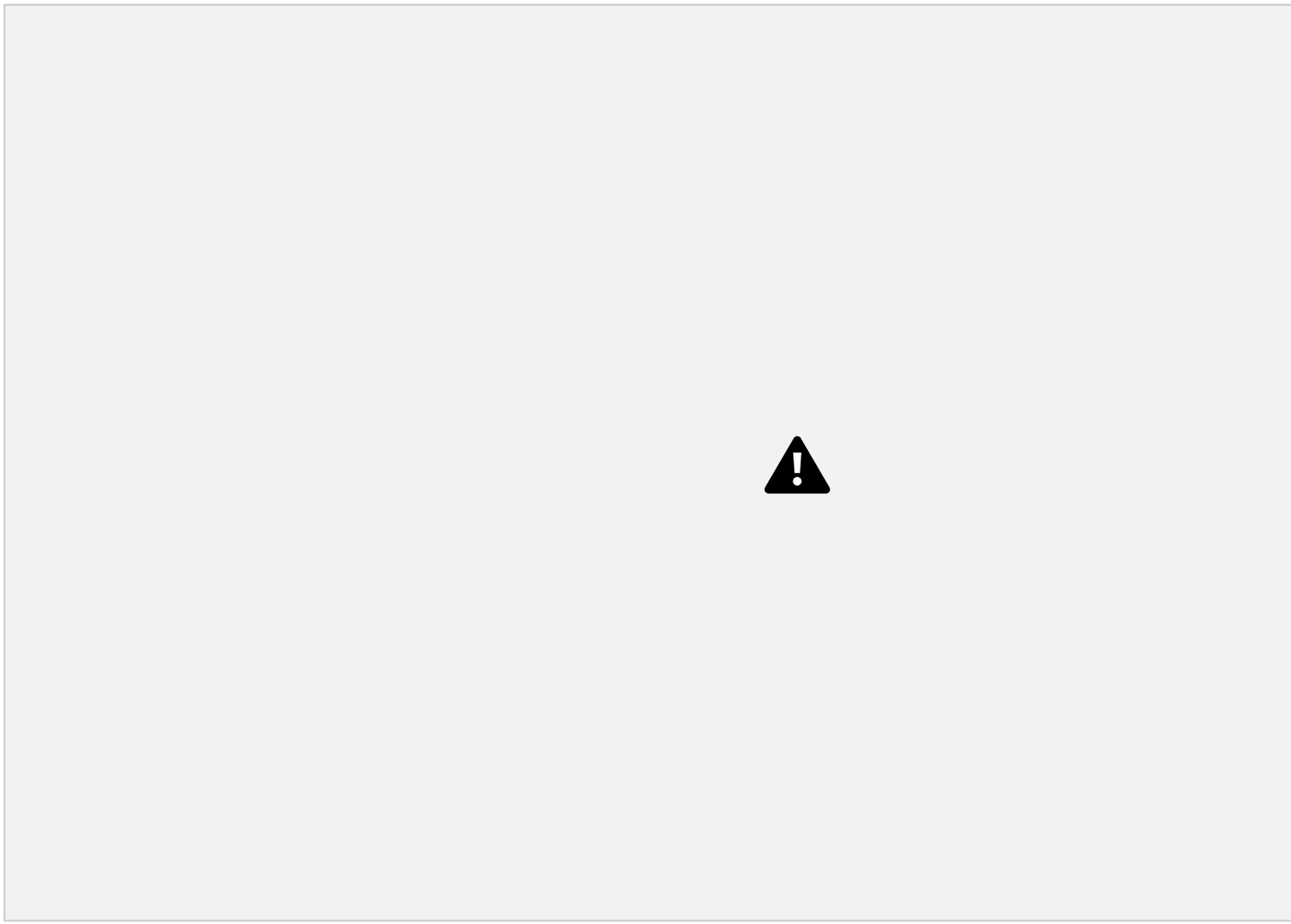


Figure 7: Key Stakeholders of the Security Sector Study Day

3.1.1.3 *Conducted Study Day to Revitalize the Operations of the Joint Maritime Committee (JMC)*

The JMC was established in 2006 to provide an interagency platform for the coordination of Sierra Leone's maritime security. Among other things, the JMC was mandated to support the relevant MDAs to protect Sierra Leone's fisheries and marine resources from illegal fishing; ensure safety at sea through adequate and timely response to sea disasters; protect Sierra Leone's coastline from threats emanating from illicit drug trafficking, smuggling, piracy, and other illegal marine based activities, and monitor, control and surveil the Inshore Exclusion Zone (IEZ) and the Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) of Sierra Leone.

However, since its establishment, the JMC had not been able to fully carryout its mandate to ensure that the GoSL realizes the full potentials of the blue economy.

Consequently, the ONS organized a Study Day on 24th August, 2024 to enable maritime security stakeholders to meet and discuss the factors inhibiting the committee's performance.

The Study Day aimed at achieving a clear understanding of the operational framework of JMC by all members and their respective roles; and set out concrete actions that would revive both the Steering Group and Management Team.

The Study Day attracted participants from the ONS; Ministry of Fisheries and Marine Resources (MFMR; Sierra Leone Maritime Administration (SLMA); Sierra Leone Ports and Harbours Authority (SLPHA); Central Intelligence and Security Agency (CISA); Sierra Leone Police (SLP); Republic of Sierra Leone Armed Forces (RSLAF); Ministry of Justice (MoJ) ; Ministry of Finance (MoF); Sierra Leone Immigration Department (SLID); National Revenue Authority (NRA); Environmental Protection Agency (EPA); and Petroleum Regulatory Agency (PRA).

Statements geared towards revitalizing the functionality of the JMC were made by the National Security Coordinator, Office of National Security; Ag. Chief of Defence Staff, Republic of Sierra Leone Armed Forces; Inspector General of Police, Sierra Leone Police; Representative of the Minister of Finance; Deputy Head of Mission, British High Commission; Deputy Executive Director, Sierra Leone Maritime Administration; and Deputy Director General, Sierra Leone Ports and Harbours Authority. The Honourable Minister of Fisheries and Marine Resources delivered the Keynote Address.

The following topics were presented and discussed by the stakeholders:

i) Purpose, Structure and Functions of JMC

ii) Potentials of Sierra Leone's Blue Economy

iii) Maritime Safety and Security

iv) Marine Environmental Degradation

v) Existing Legal Instruments for JMC Operations

vi) Enhancing Responsible Fishing Practices: Challenges and Recommendations

vii) Funding for JMC: Challenges and Prospect.

The Study Day was concluded with key recommendations for the effective operationalization of the JMC.

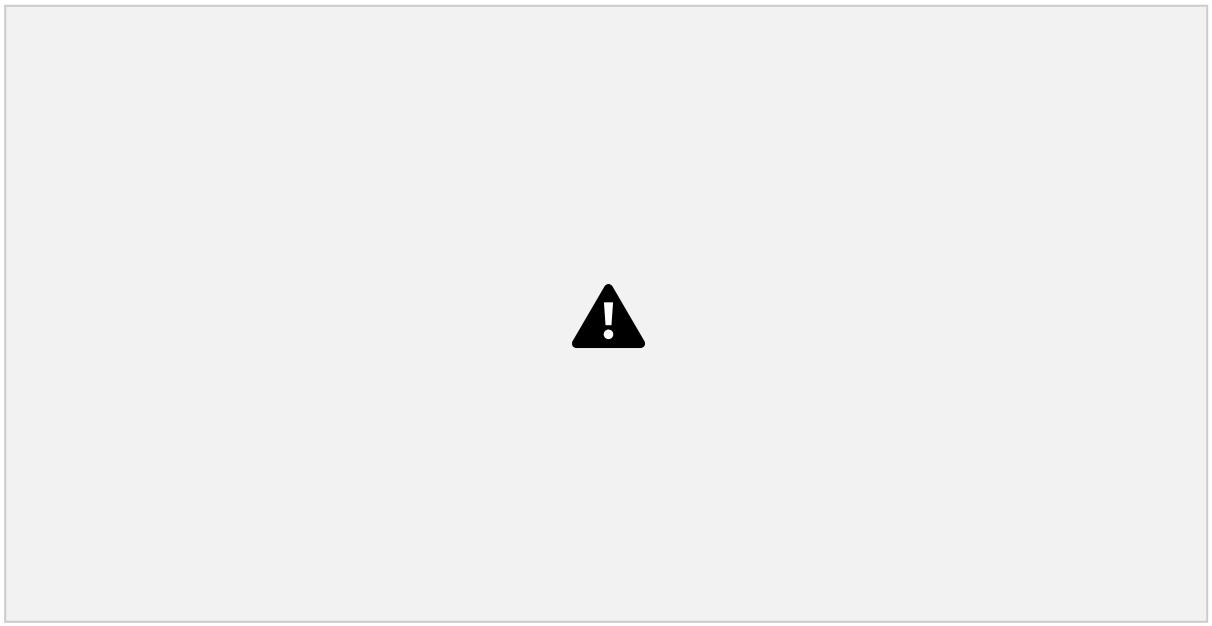


Figure 8: The NSCoord, Mr. Abdulai Caulker making a Statement at the JMC Study

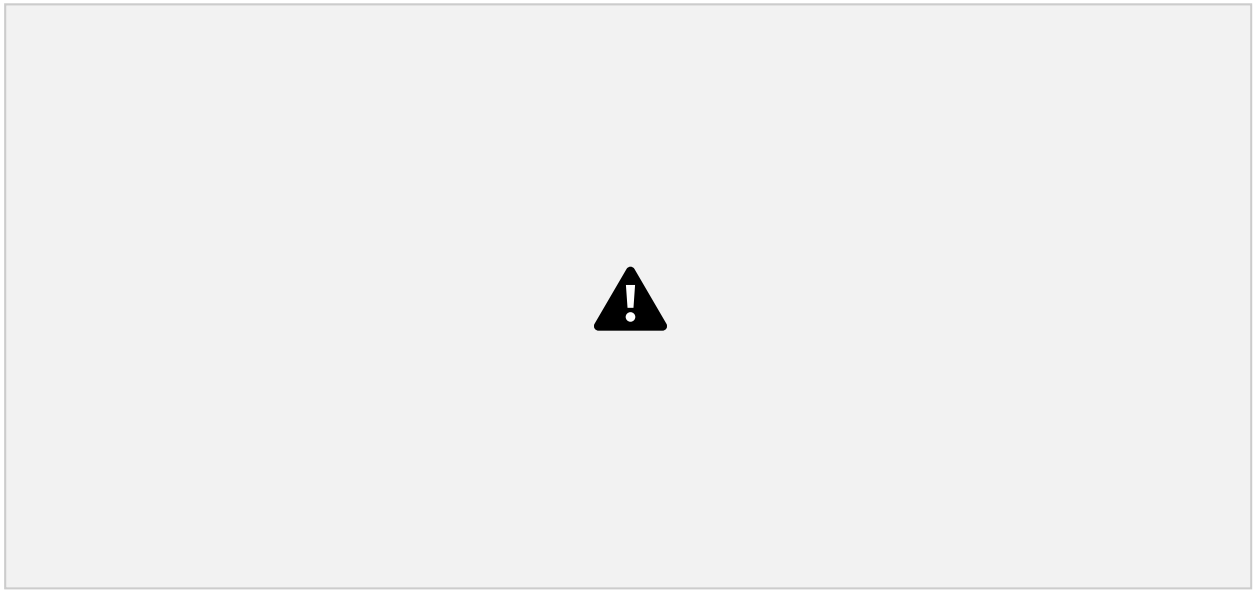


Figure 9: Stakeholders at the JMC Study Day

3.1.1.4 Developed Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) for the

Harmonization of the Registration, Licensing and Oversight of Financial Services and Other Businesses

The ONS coordinated the development and signing of a Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) for the Harmonization of the Registration, Licensing and Oversight of Financial Services/Companies and Related Businesses. The Bank of Sierra Leone (BSL), the National Investment Board (NIB) and the Financial Intelligence Agency (FIA) signed the document on 5th November, 2024 in the Conference Hall of the ONS. The NSCoord and head of ONS, Mr. Abdulai Caulker, counter-signed the document as a witness and to also affirm the security sector's commitment to supporting MDAs in addressing key security, governance and other service delivery challenges which they face. The SOP sought, *inter alia*, to establish a one-stop centre to regulate and provide oversight of company/business registration, through a Business Regulation Coordination Committee (BRCC), which is to be coordinated by NIB.

The decision to develop the SOP came as a result of lapses identified amongst the signatory institutions such as weak inter-agency collaboration and coordination in the registration of business entities, including companies and financial services in the country. These weaknesses were exploited by fraudsters to set up fake schemes and embark on fraudulent activities, targeting unsuspecting members of the public.

In his remarks at the signing ceremony, the National Security Coordinator, Mr. Caulker, described the development of the SOP as a milestone achievement for the country and appreciated the efforts of the Technical Working Team (TWT) and the leadership of NIB, BSL and FIA for their commitment and support to the process. He appealed to the implementing MDAs (NIB, BSL and FIA) to ensure adherence to the SOP.

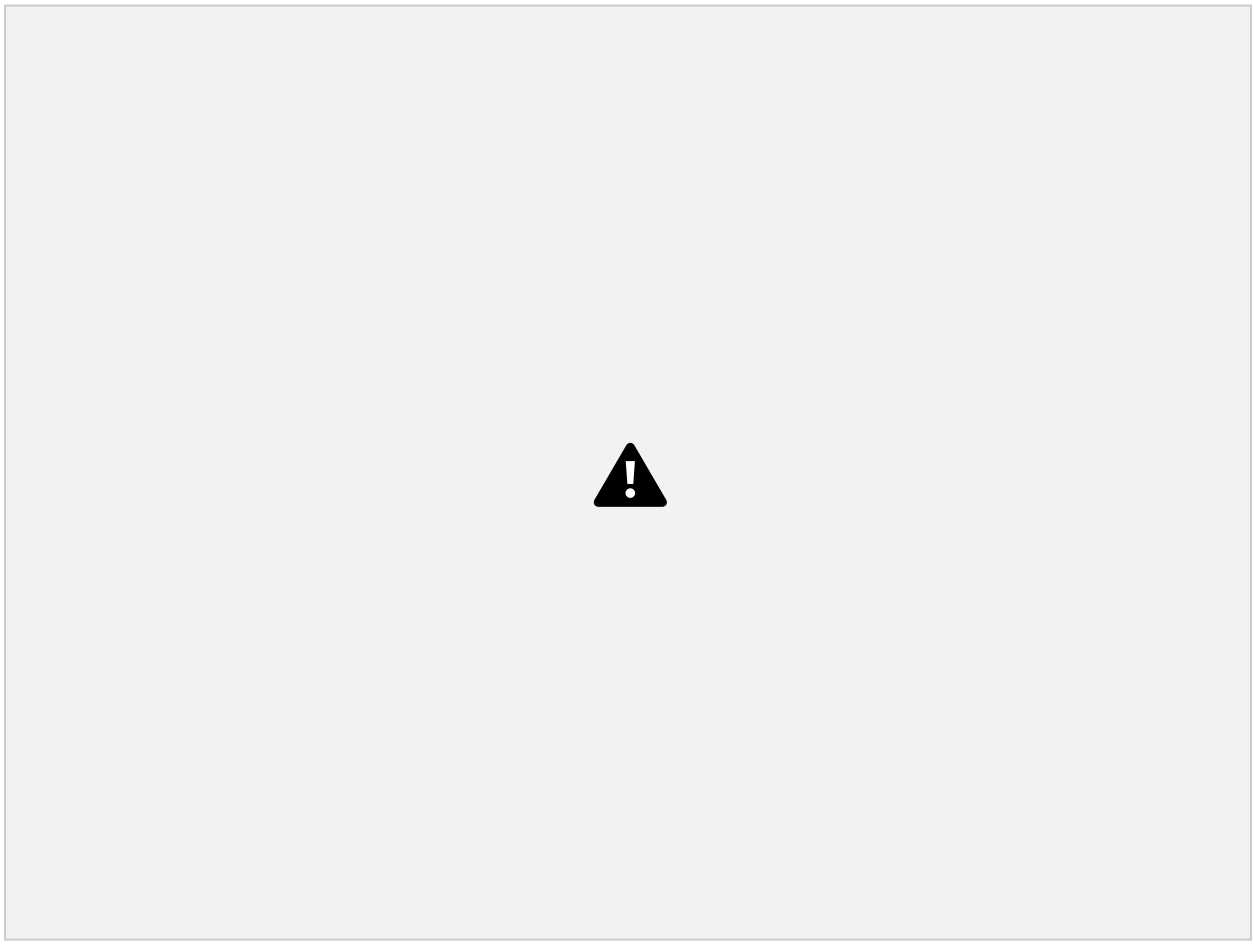


Figure 10: Signing of the Standard Operating Procedure for the Harmonization of the Registration, Licensing and Oversight of Financial Services and other Businesses by the NIB, FIA and NIB

3.1.1.5 Coordinated the Security Sector's Efforts that ensured the Return of Paramount Chief (PC) Jibao Nyama Russell to Lower Banta Chiefdom

Since 2019, PC Jibao Nyama Russell had had a frosty and acrimonious relationship with some of his subjects which had degenerated into hostilities and physical confrontations making the Chiefdom no longer hospitable for the PC. He was then advised to leave the Chiefdom for his own safety and security. Thereafter, a ten-man Committee was constituted to administer the affairs of the Chiefdom in the absence of the PC. In 2024,

after several stakeholder engagements at the national, regional, district, and chiefdom levels, the Government of Sierra Leone took the bold decision to get the PC to return to his Chiefdom. In that regard, the NSCCG in collaboration with other stakeholders returned the PC Jibao Nyama Russel to Gbangbatoke Town, the headquarters of Lower Banta Chiefdom, Moyamba District, on the 15th February 2024. Although the return ceremony was briefly interrupted in the morning hours, the program however later went on unhindered as the Police took charge and ensured that the various stakeholders were able to make statements reiterating the importance of peace, cohesion and mutual respect.

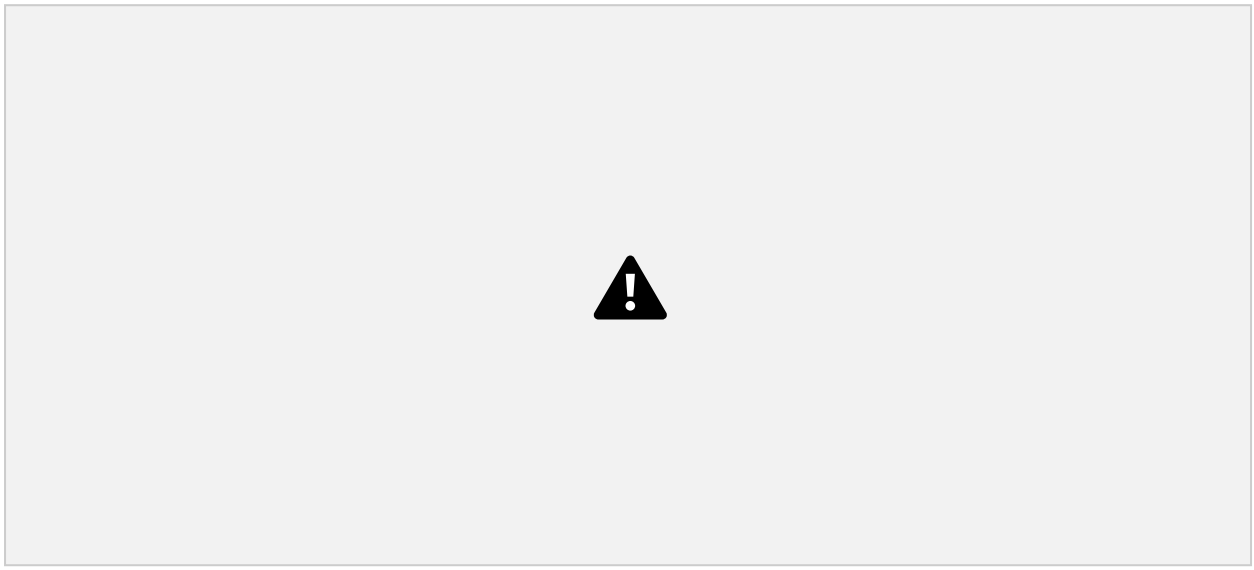


Figure 11: PC Jibao Nyama Russell of lower Banta Chiefdom and Senior Stakeholders at the High Table

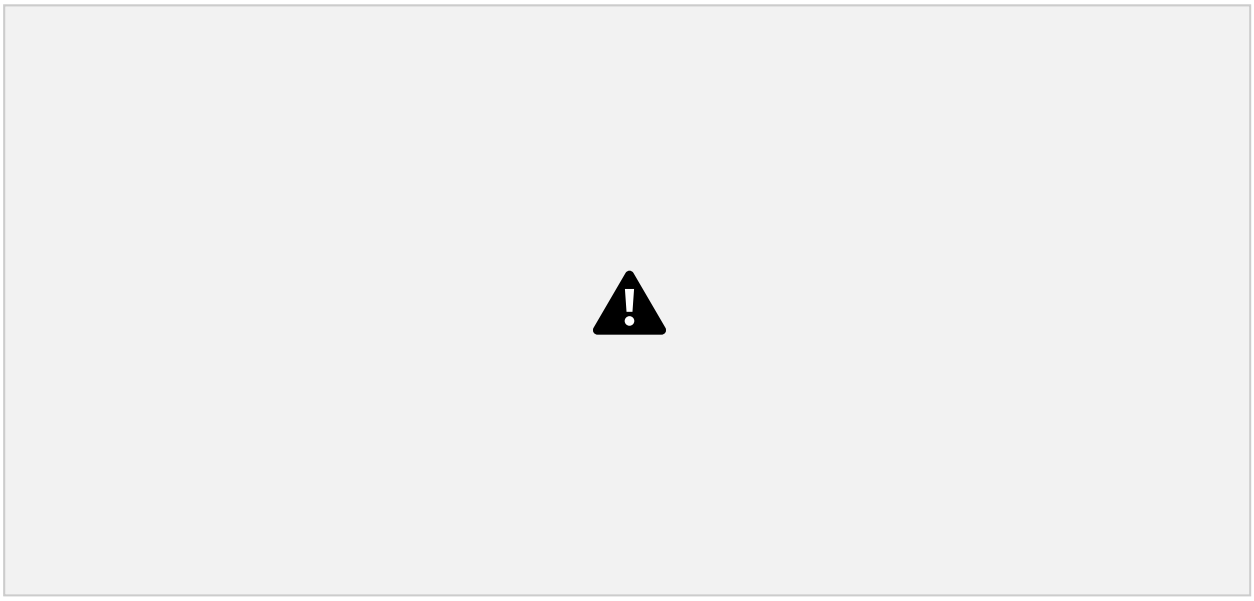


Figure 12: Chiefdom People and Other Stakeholders

3.1.1.6 Combating Maritime-based Organized Crime through Coordination of the Seaport Cooperation Project (SEACOP) Activities at Queen Elizabeth II Quay

The Seaport Cooperation Project (SEACOP) is a European Commission initiative set up to prevent the Trans-Atlantic cocaine flow to the European Union, and to provide support to West African countries along the Atlantic Ocean to counter drug trafficking (cocaine/narcotic) and other serious transnational organized crimes such as explosives and firearms trafficking, trafficking of persons and nuclear materials (among others) through containers, commercial vessels, pleasure crafts, go-fast launchers, pirogues, yachts, coasters, freighters and fishing boats. The SEACOP Team in Sierra Leone functions under an integrated command, using the TOCU structure with the ONS providing overall coordination.

Through the vigilance of the SEACOP operatives at the Queen Elizabeth II Quay, 100 packets (each containing two kilograms) of dried leaves suspected to be Kush; 1,400 grosses of Royal Tramadol Hydrochloride Tablets; 2,475 grosses of 225 milligrams of Royal Tapentadol Hydrochloride Tablets and 1,000 grosses of 250 milligrams of Royal Tapentadol Hydrochloride Tablets, pistol magazine concealed in a Toyota Landcruiser and 2 stolen Pathfinders were discovered in different forty (40) feet containers.

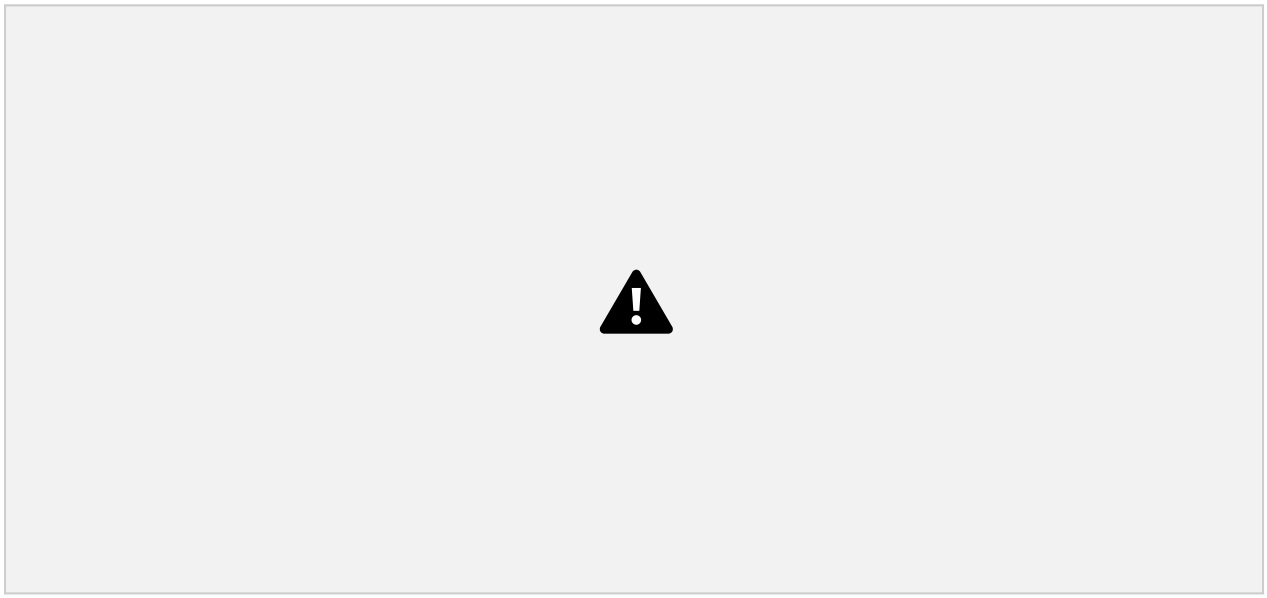


Figure13: Dried Leaves suspected to be Kush

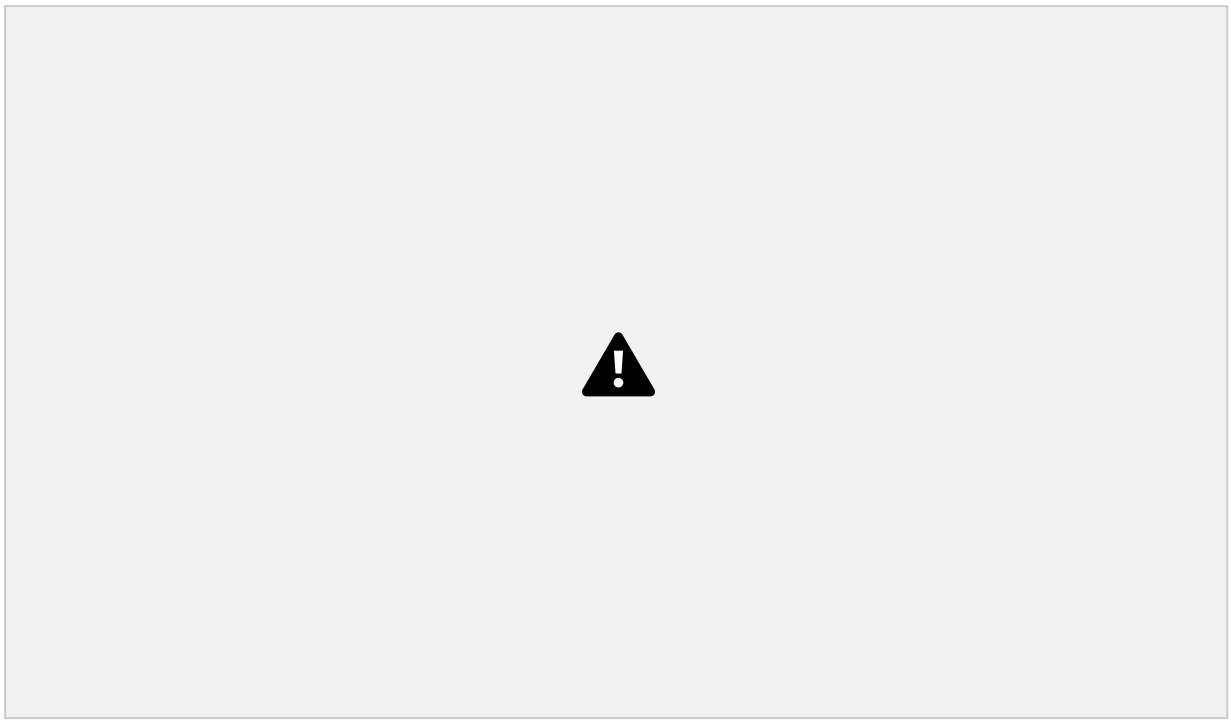


Figure 14: 1,400 Grosses of Royal Tramadol

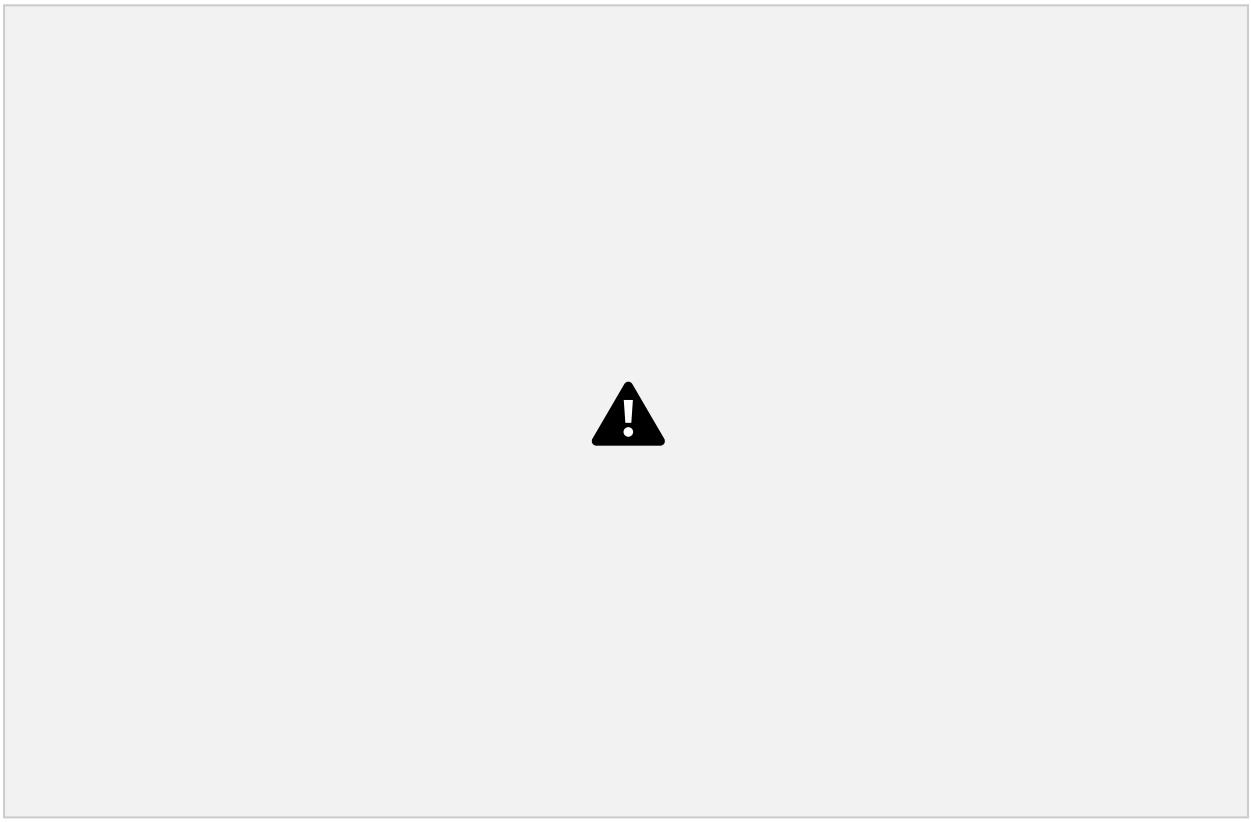


Figure 15: 250 Milligrams of Royal Tapentadol

3.1.1.7 Coordinated Training of SEACOP Operatives in Maritime Intelligence Unit

As part of the efforts to curb transnational organized crimes within the maritime domain, the ONS coordinated the Maritime Intelligence Unit (MIU) Training aimed at enhancing field operatives' capacity and efficiency in maritime surveillance, regarding vessels sailing in the territorial waters or calling in ports in Sierra Leone. The overarching objective was to build personnel effectiveness against narcotics or illicit cargo trafficking within the maritime domain. The training was conducted in Sierra Leone from Monday 12th to Friday 16th February, 2024. The training opportunity was provided by the SEACOP West Africa Regional Coordinator.

At the opening session of the training, the NSCoord expressed delight over the conduct of the first-ever maritime intelligence training in Sierra Leone. He thanked and welcomed the organizers and encouraged participants to put aside all personal concerns and fully

concentrate on the training. The NSCoord emphasized the need for them to ask the pertinent questions in order to enhance thorough understanding of the concept.

Following the training conducted in February, 2024 the SEACOP VI held a follow-up

training of SEACOP operatives from 7th to 11th October, 2024. The follow-up training brought together participants from a Combined Maritime Control Unit (CMCU) including representatives from the National Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA), the SLP (TOCU, Marine Police), Sierra Leone Immigration Department (SLID), Central Intelligence and Security Agency (CISA), Sierra Leone Maritime Administration (SLMA), Pharmacy Board Sierra Leone (PBSL), Customs Department (National Revenue Authority), and Sierra Leone Ports and Harbours Authority (SLPHA). Expert facilitators from the Maritime Analysis and Operations Centre (Narcotics) – MAOC (N) led practical exercises on combating illicit trafficking and piracy, aimed at improving participants' skills in vessel profiling, risk analysis, and intelligence-sharing.

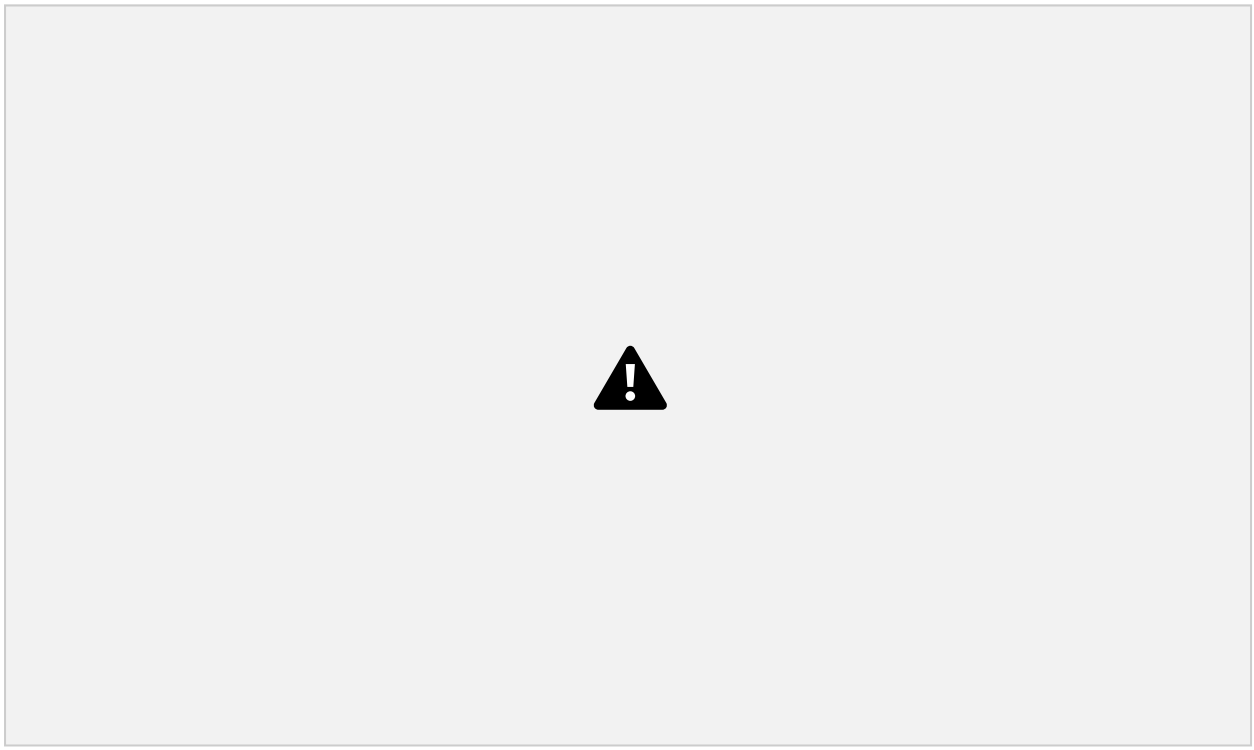


Figure 16: Engagement with SEACOP Regional Coordinators and Operatives

3.1.1.8 Coordinated Efforts to Repatriate Stranded Sierra Leonean Migrants

In 2024, the ONS coordinated the repatriation of 586 stranded Sierra Leonean migrants from Niger, Mali, Lebanon, Mauritania, Turkey, Algeria and Tunisia. All these migrants

were profiled by the Transnational Organized Crime Unit (TOCU) before they were released into society. The ONS led a delegation that conducted in-person verification of over 460 Sierra Leonean migrants stranded in Niamey and Agadez in Niger.

3.1.1.9 Coordinated Efforts Aimed at Protecting National Protected Areas against Massive Encroachment

The security sector took action that ensured provision of effective security on some of the National Protected Areas including the Western Area Peninsular National Park (WAPNP) in particular and the Guma Valley Dam at Mile 13. The Guma Valley Dam experienced massive encroachment on its facility thereby undermining the integrity of the Dam. As a consequence, the ONS coordinated the demolition of houses/structures that encroached on the Guma Valley Dam. The demolition of such structures would minimize the likely impact on the integrity of the Guma Valley Dam.

3.1.1.10 Coordinated the Fight Against Land-based Transnational Organized Crime through the TOCU Framework

The ONS carried out its function of coordinating the fight against organized crime by ensuring the effective functioning of the TOCU Advisory and Management Boards. Through its effective coordination role, the following were achieved in the fight against organized crime:

i. All statutory meetings of the Advisory Board and the Management Board were held for the period under review.

ii. The Pharmacy and Drugs Act, 2001 was reviewed through inter-agency collaboration with a view to adopting stiff sentences and fines for culprits.

iii. Coordinated the development of an SOP on the Handling of Organized Crime - related Exhibits and their Swift Destruction.

iv. Monitored the reporting, investigation and prosecution of over 42 cases of drugs related crimes and 17 cases of human trafficking which TOCU headquarters was handling. 21 of the 42 drugs cases were charged to court whilst the remaining ones are under investigation or sent for the Director of Public Prosecution (DPP)'s advice. All the human trafficking cases are either under active investigation or sent to the DPP for advice.

v. In three separate exercises, the ONS facilitated the destruction of huge quantities of illicit substances, restricted fake medical drugs, ecstasy drugs and fake sex enhancers.

3.1.1.11 Coordinated National Efforts for Cross-Border Cooperation between Sierra Leone and Guinea

In November 2024, the NS Coord of the ONS facilitated a joint technical mission to promote peaceful coexistence and improve border management between Sierra Leone

and Guinea. The mission included a 10-member team from Sierra Leone and their Guinean counterparts, conducting meetings in both countries. In Sierra Leone, discussions were held in Mongo (Falaba District), Gbinle Dixon (Kambia District), and Koindu (Kailahun District). On the Guinean side, the team visited Madina Oullah, Oureh Kabba, Maniella, and Nongoah

The mission, led by officials from both countries' border security agencies, aimed to raise awareness, consolidate peace, and promote neighbourly relations. It addressed challenges such as illegal socio-economic activities, human trafficking, natural resource exploitation, and cross-border crimes that fuel insecurity and environmental degradation in border areas.

During community engagements, the mission emphasized messages of peace, social cohesion, and strengthened civil-military cooperation. Border populations were urged to [illegible] fostering collaboration

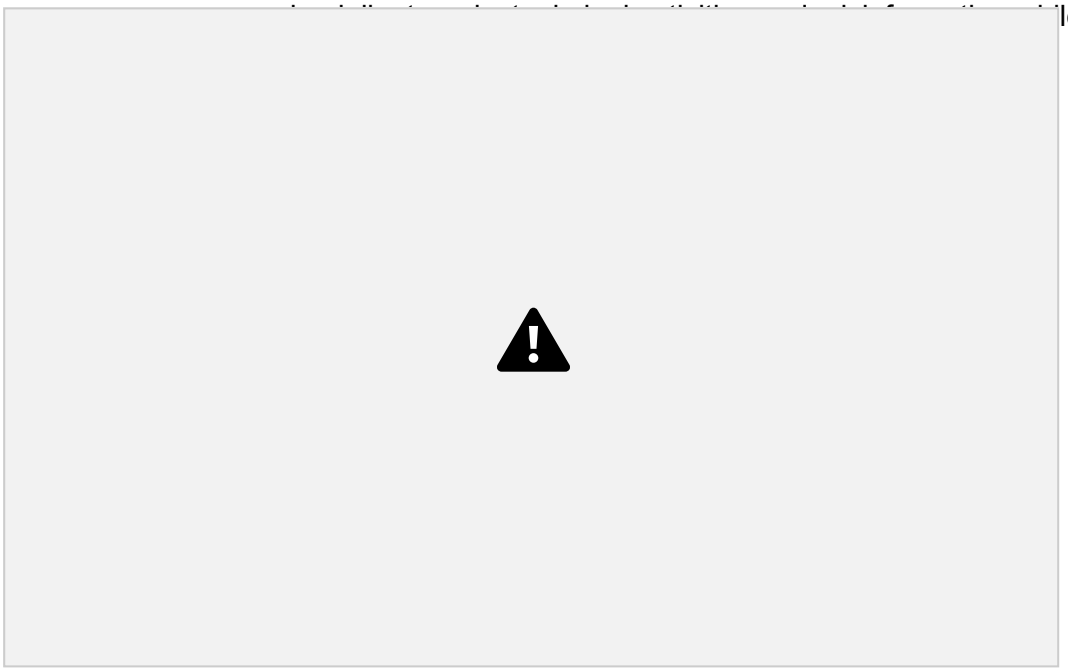


Figure 17: Visit of the Joint Technical Mission to the Chef de Canton

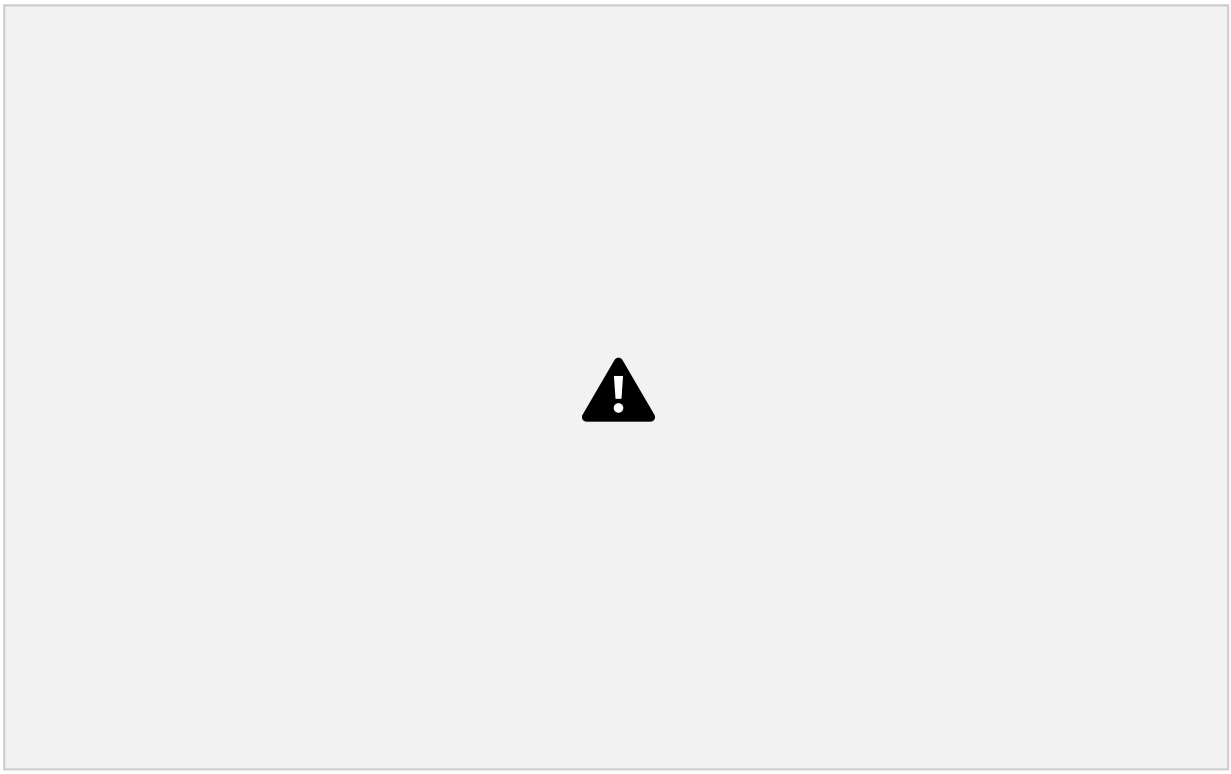


Figure 18: The Joint Technical Mission in discussion with the Chef de Canton

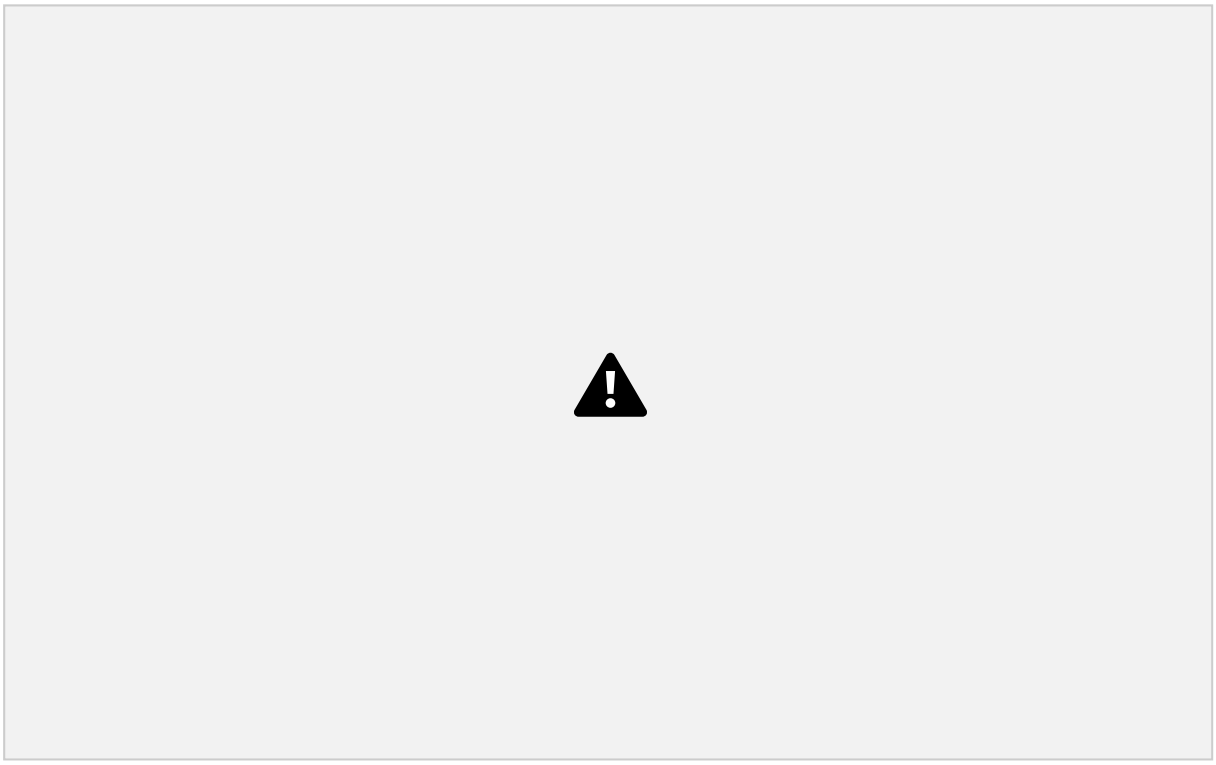


Figure 19: The Joint Technical Team pose for a snapshot with the Chef de Canton

3.1.1.12 Preparation of Threat Assessment and SSG Papers

In 2024, the ONS prepared a number of Threat Assessment Papers on critical security issues including: *i) Proposed Increase in Tariffs at the Toll Gate; ii) Excesses of Secret Societies; iii) Challenges Faced by Renewable Energy Service Providers; iv) Operations of Ponzi Schemes and Fraudulent Travel Scams;* and *v) Challenges to Healthcare Service Delivery*.

The Strategic Situation Group (SSG) chaired by ONS also developed a number proposals, some of which were on the following issues: *i) Business Regulations; ii) Removal of Squatters from the Sierra Leone Ports and Harbours Authority (SLPHA) Facility; iii) Illegal Mining Activities; iv) How Local Governance Influence and Impact on Central Administration;* and *v) Paramount Chiefs Relationship with their Subjects.*

These assessment papers were discussed by the NSCCG and policy directives given to address issues raised by the assessments. For instance, the threat assessment on **"Challenges Faced in the Implementation of the Rural Renewable Energy Project Across the Country"** attracted the attention of key players in the energy sector, including the Deputy Minister of Energy. In one of the NSCCG meetings, the Deputy Minister of Energy acknowledged almost all of the challenges and national security implications raised in the paper. He conveyed his Ministry's appreciation of the paper, and promised to use it as one of the reference guides to address concerns affecting the successful implementation of the Rural Renewable Energy Project.

3.1.1.13 Mobilization of Funds for Sector-wide Operations

The ONS continued to serve as a conduit for a centralized funding of joint security sector operations aimed at improving state security. In 2024, it sourced funding for the operations of the JCTU at the FNA, night-patrols by the JPGF, refurbishment of the NJOC facility, and the nationwide MAC-P operations.

3.2 Security Coordination at Provincial Level

Security coordination at provincial level is carried out by the ONS through the PROSECs, DISECs and CHISECs. They are a creature of the NaSCIA, 2023 with the mandate to provide early warning to the Council, through the National security Coordinator, of the existence or likelihood of any security threat to the country, Government, province, district or the chiefdom.

The PROSECs, DISECs and CHISECs are the key regional fora that bring together primary security players, local government administrators, civil society, women and

youth groups, and traditional leaders to participate in the discussion and resolution of issues that affect security in their communities.

In 2024, the ONS continued to coordinate all the five (5) provincial and sixteen (16) district security committees. At the chiefdom level, the ONS continued to maintain presence in forty-three (43) out of one hundred and ninety (190) chiefdoms in Sierra Leone. While eleven (11) of the forty-three (43) chiefdoms had Chiefdom Security Coordinators, the remaining thirty-two (32) had Focal Persons.

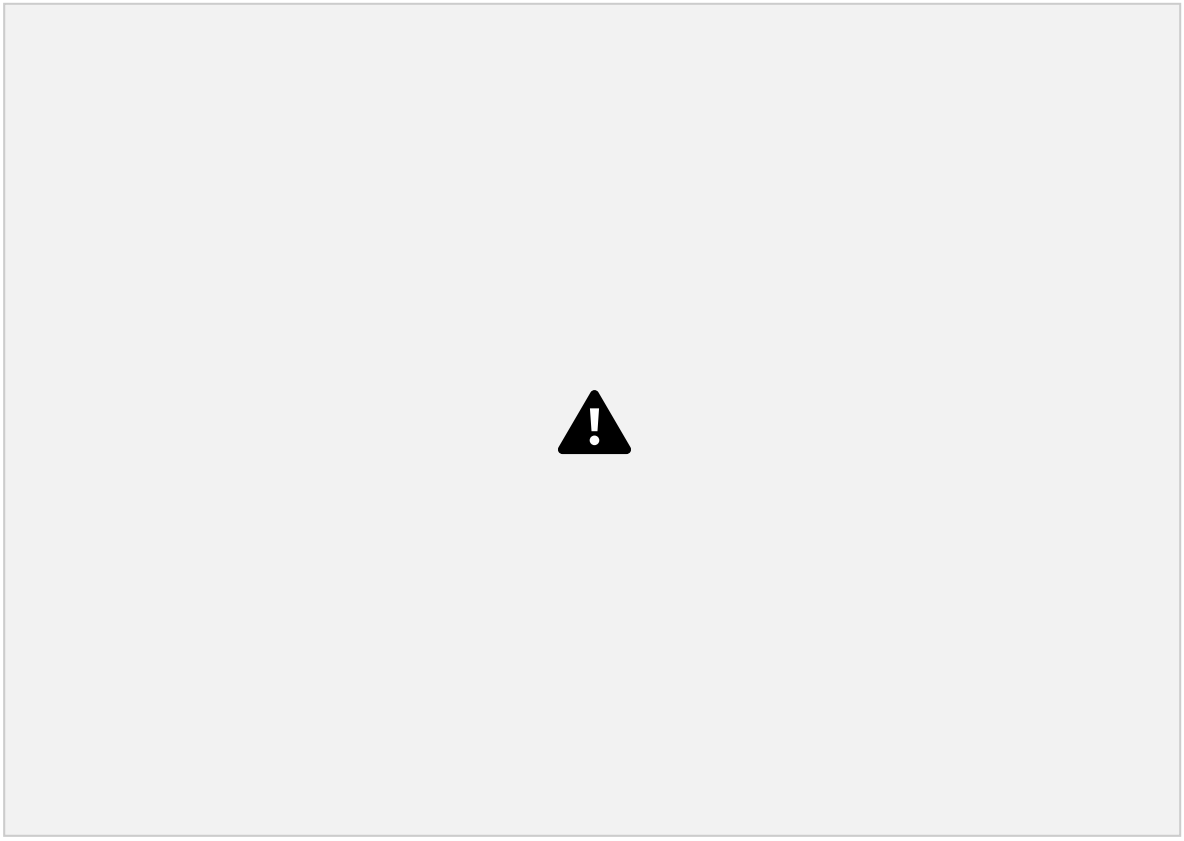


Figure 20: Provincial Security Committees (PROSECs)

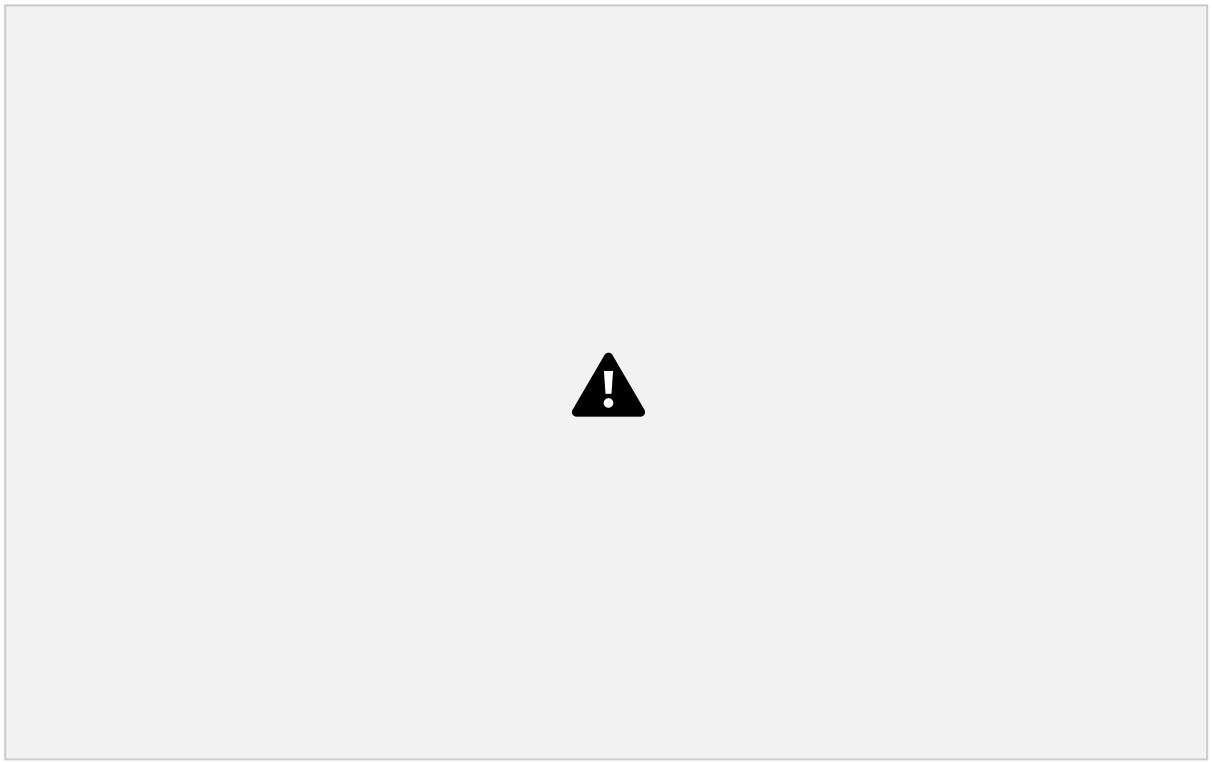


Figure 21: District Security Committees (DISECs)

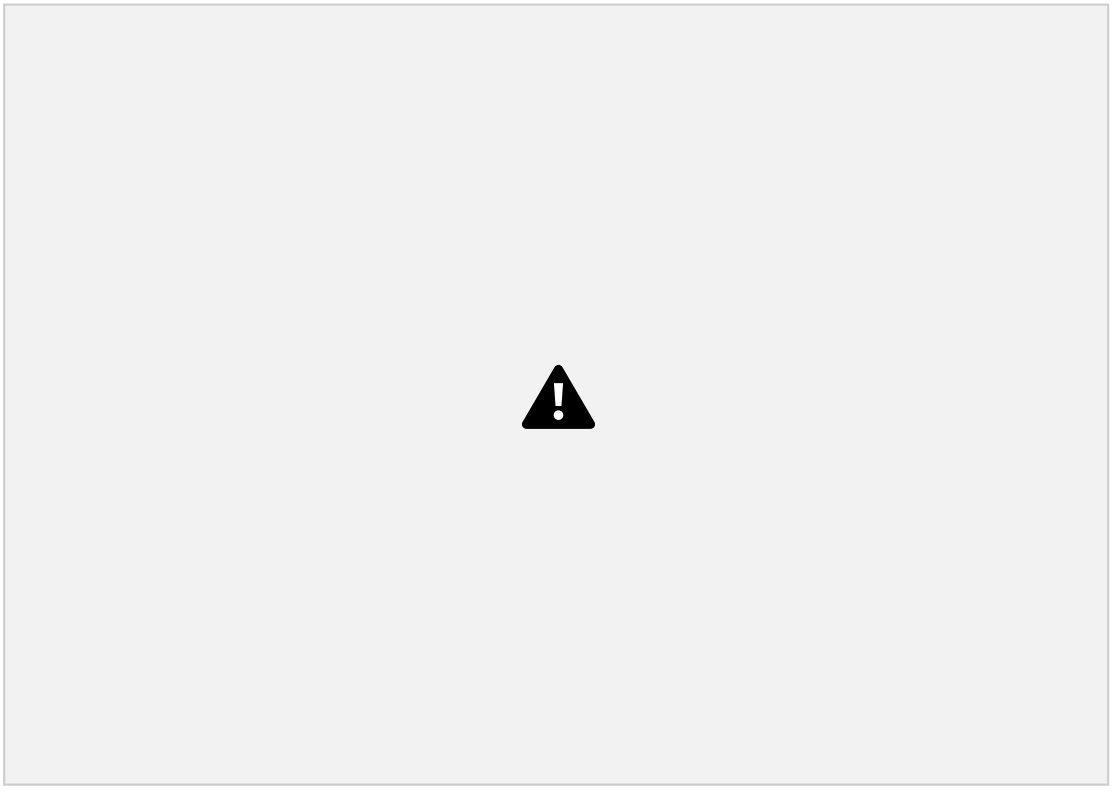


Figure 22: Chiefdom Security Committees (CHISECs)

3.2.1 Provincial Level Security Coordination Meetings

In 2024, the ONS coordinated **1,130 (76.2%)** provincial level security committee

meetings out of the 1,482 PROSEC, DISEC and CHISEC expected meetings. The committees also held 73 emergency/outreach meetings as shown in the table below:

Committee	Expected Number of Meetings	Actual Number of Meetings Held			Number of Emergency/ Outreach Meetings
		Number	Percentage (%)		
PROSEC	130	98	75		07
DISEC	780	585	75		35
CHISEC	572	447	78.1		31
TOTAL	1,482	**1,130**	76.2		73

Figure 23: Expected and actual number of meetings held by the PROSECs, DISECs & CHISECs

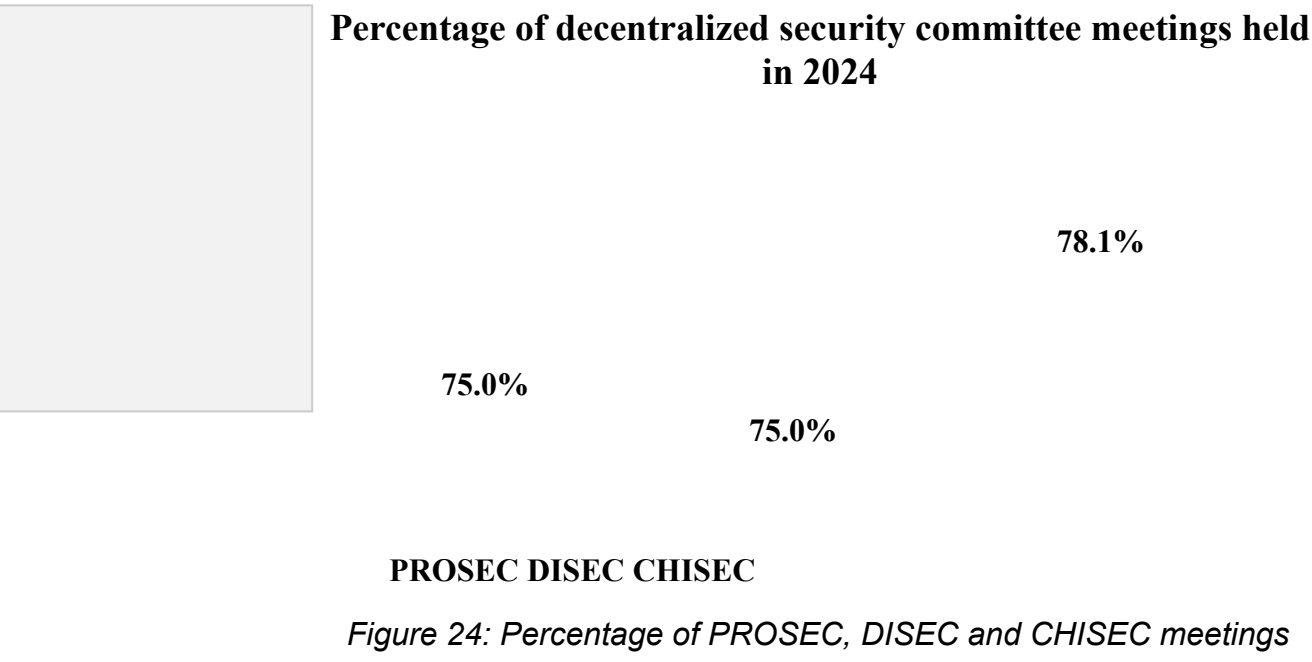


Figure 24: Percentage of PROSEC, DISEC and CHISEC meetings

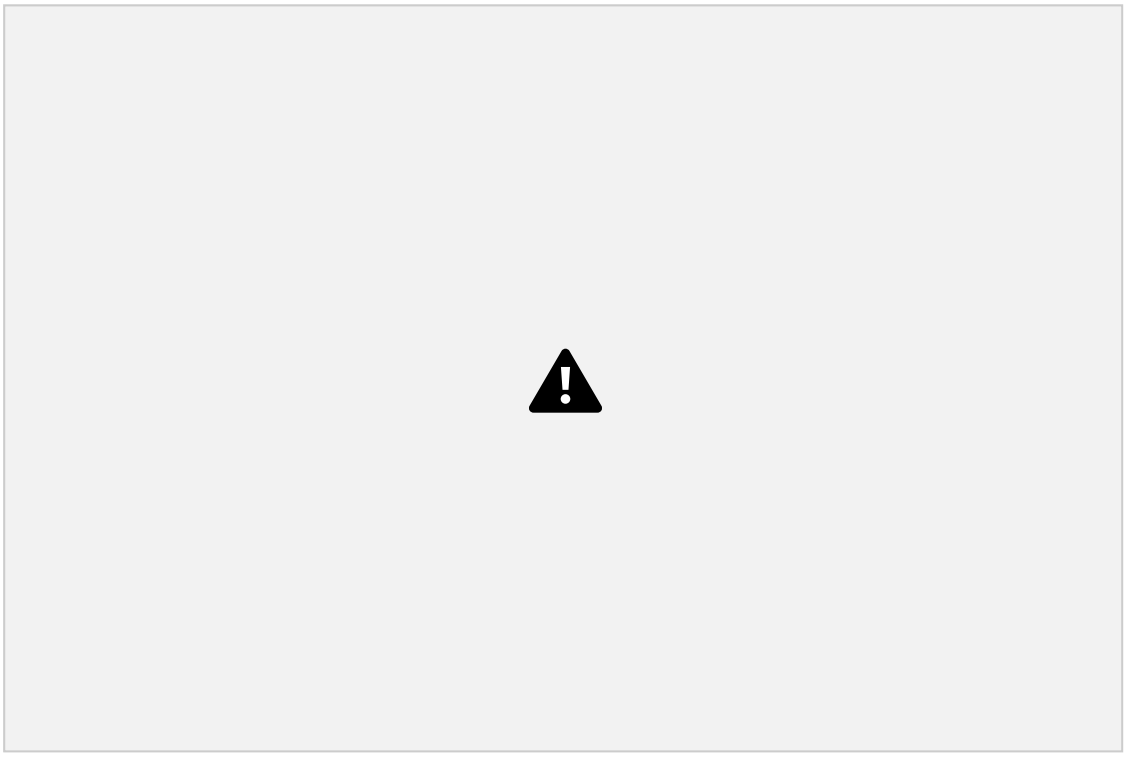


Figure 25: PROSEC South meeting in progress

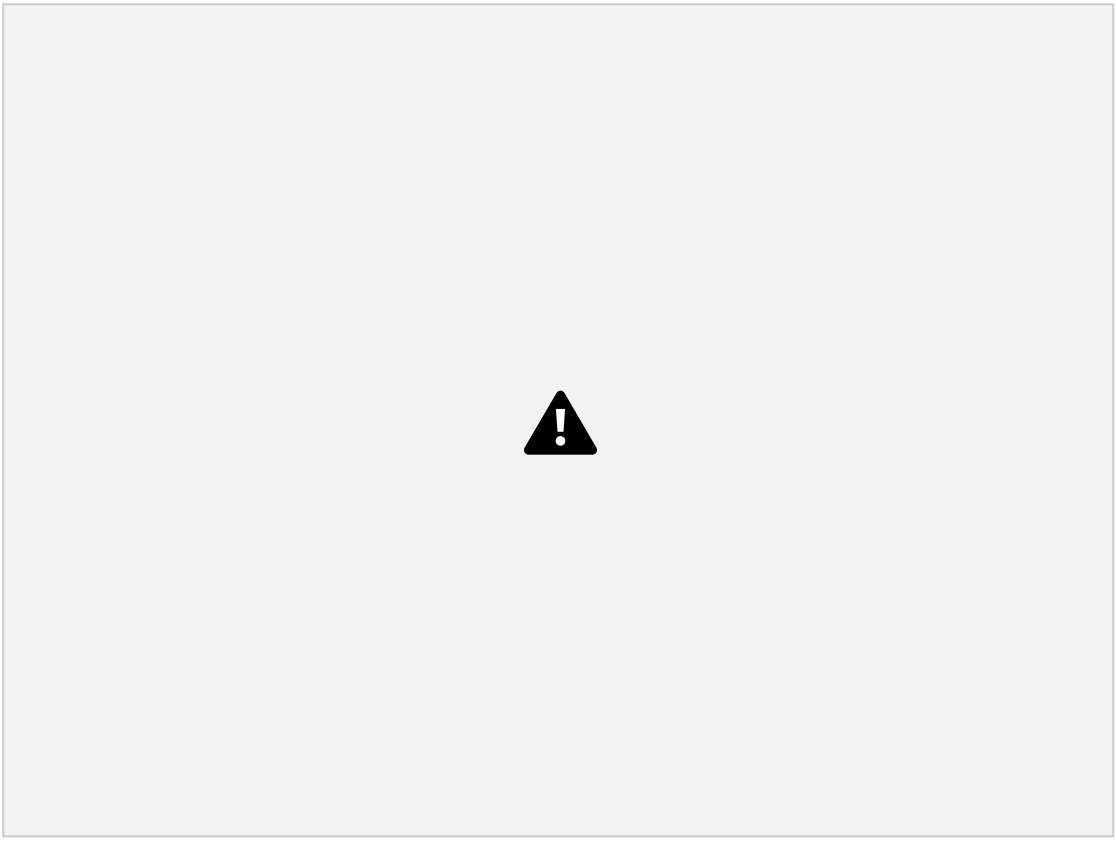


Figure 26: DISEC Moyamba meeting in progress

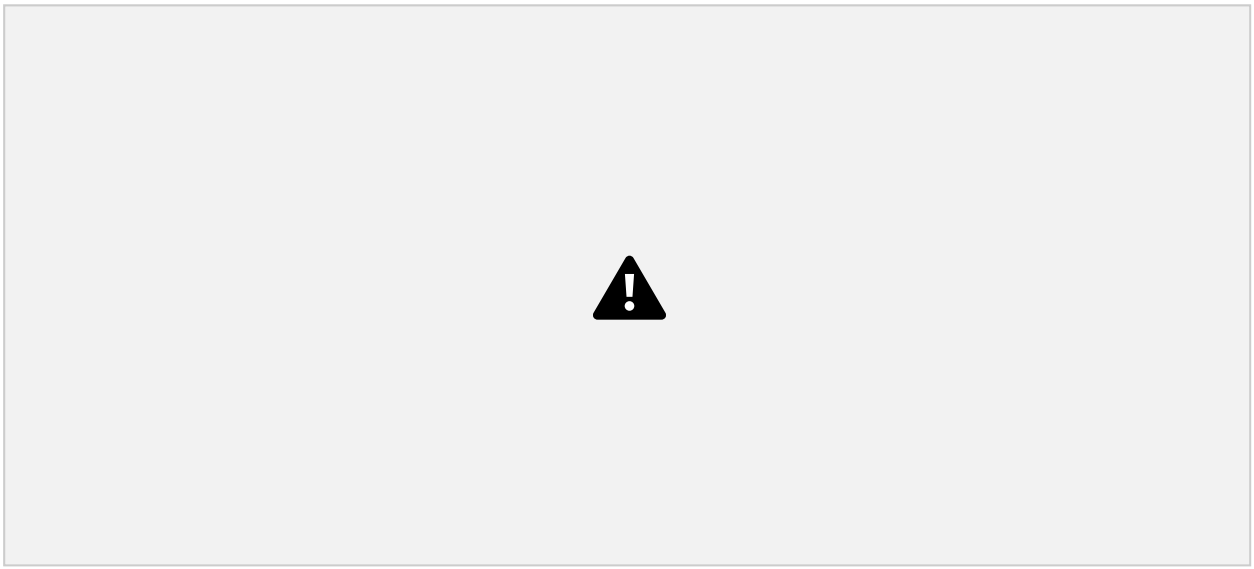


Figure 27: CHISEC Gbane Kandor meeting in progress

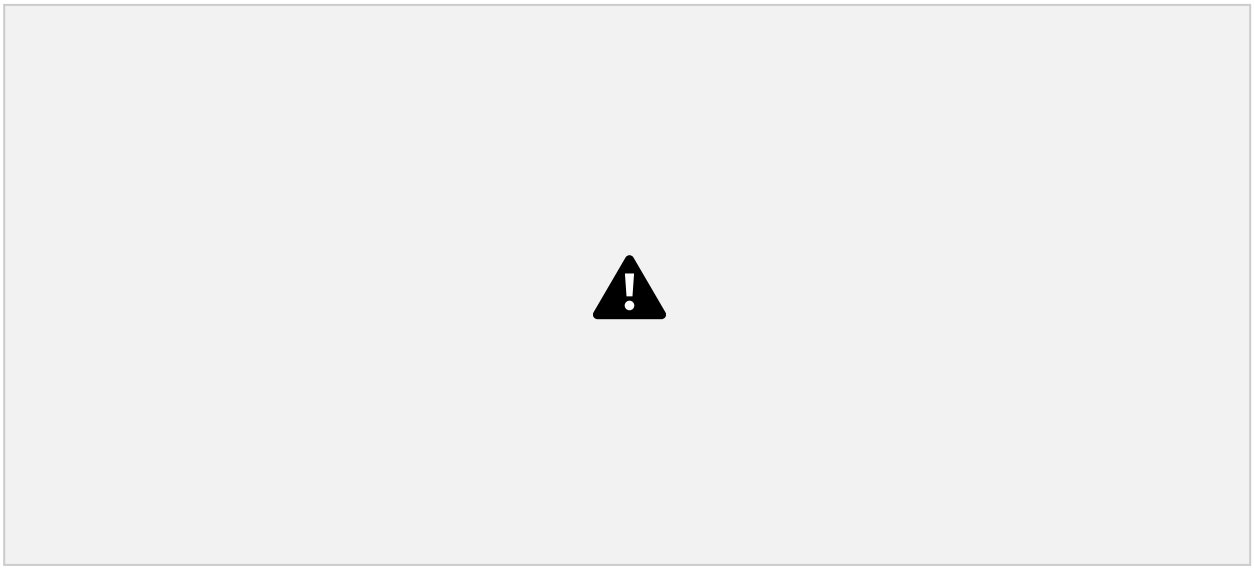


Figure 28: Monitoring Paramount Chieftaincy elections

4.0 CONFLICT PREVENTION AND MANAGEMENT THROUGH THE EARLY WARNING AND EARLY RESPONSE (EWER) MECHANISM

In 2024, the ONS coordinated efforts of stakeholders to address the multifaceted conflicts in Sierra Leone, focusing on tensions between cattle herders and crop farmers, land and

boundary disputes, disputes within traditional authority structures, and conflicts between multi-national companies and local communities. These disputes had resulted in violence, property destruction, and loss of life, necessitating the intervention of the District Security Committees (DISECs) and Provincial Security Committees (PROSECs). The DISECs and PROSECs adopted the following strategies to address the various conflicts that emerged: stakeholder engagements, imposing of sanctions, promoting peaceful co-existence, and monitoring the implementation of mutually approved agreements. While these efforts have provided temporary relief in some cases, unresolved issues persist and require comprehensive strategies for sustainable peace.

4.1 Resolution of Conflicts between Cattle Herders and Crop Farmers

The conflict between cattle herders and crop farmers has been a recurring issue, driven by the destruction of crops by cattle, retaliation by farmers through the killing of cattle, theft of livestock, and perceptions of biased treatment in dispute resolution. These factors have escalated into violent confrontations, property damage, and fatalities. The PROSECs and DISECs intervened and resolved a total of 15 conflicts between cattle herders and crop farmers in Sella Limba, Yagala Komboya, Gbane Kandor, Kamaje, Sogbini, and Gbonkorboh Kayaka Chiefdoms. The conflicts were characterized by death, destruction of farmland and crops and burning of homes and ranches.

4.2 Resolution of Land and Boundary Disputes

Land and boundary disputes are widespread across Sierra Leone, leading to violence, strained relationships, and economic losses. These disputes often stem from unclear boundaries, resource allocation disagreements, and the reorganization of regions. The PROSECs and DISECs intervened and resolved land and boundary conflicts that emerged in different communities in Koinadugu, Port Loko, Tonkolili, Bo and Falaba Districts. However, there are other land-related conflicts that were unresolved but the decentralized security committees succeeded in de-escalating the tension in the affected communities hoping to resolve them in the future.

4.3 Resolution of Intra- and inter-Chiefdom Conflicts

The PROSECs and DISECs recorded a number of intra-and inter-chiefdom conflicts in Galiness, Nieni, Tambakha Yobangie, Kowa, Lower Banta, Paki Masabong, Neya, Sulima, Dembelia Sinkunia, Kalian, Konike Fulawusu and Biriwa chiefdoms. Some of the conflicts emanated from the alleged use of inciting language against the PC on social media (Kowa Chiefdom), threats of separation to form independent chiefdoms

(Biriwa and Paki Masabong chiefdoms), pre-Paramount Chieftaincy election violence (Dembelia Sinkunia chiefdom), post-Paramount Chieftaincy election violence (Neya Chiefdom), inter-chiefdom boundary dispute (Kalian and Kunike Fulawusu chiefdoms) and resisting the legitimacy of the sitting PC (Lower Banta chiefdom).

4.4. Resolution of Conflicts between Mining Companies and Local Communities

Conflicts between mining companies and local communities persisted, and sometimes, undermined communal peace and security. In Valunia Chiefdom, FG Gold Company faced discontent over wage disparities between foreign and local workers; in Sumbuya, Lugbu Chiefdom, there was conflict between Sierra Tropical Limited and its workers over alleged theft of fuel and mistrust between the company and locals, exacerbated by a youth-led farm invasion; in Tankoro Chiefdom there was threat of industrial action by employees of Koidu Holdings Ltd. due to alleged disparity and earnings between the Sierra Leonean and foreign employees; in Tongo there was threat of industrial action and demonstrations by employees of Sierra Diamond Mining Company (SDMC) due to non payment of backlog of salaries; in Nongowa Chiefdom, the heads of the Sogbanda, Lumeh, Bundu, Gbow and Jimmy landowning families protested the alleged decision of the PC to sign a lease agreement with J. M. Mining Company without their involvement and other contentious issues; whilst in Kakua chiefdom the land owners in the Kanga/Mofindor Quarry protested against First Tricon Company's stone blasting activities, citing property damage and unmet corporate social responsibilities. Through the interventions of the PROSECs and DISECs, the various conflicts were resolved and normal operation of the affected companies was restored.

5.0 DEVELOPMENT AND IMPLEMENTATION OF PROTECTIVE SECURITY PROCEDURES IN GOVERNMENT MDAS AND CNI

In line with its mandate to develop and implement protective security procedures in government MDAs and to ensure the protection of the state's critical national infrastructure (CNI), the ONS had developed the National Protective Security Framework (NPSF) and the Protective Security Manual to guide the implementation of protective security procedures across MDAs and CNI. In 2024, the ONS held series of engagements with MDAs and CNI operators and conducted vulnerability and risk assessments; vetted

public officials and ensured provision of security on important state and public events.

5.1 Vulnerability and Risk Assessment of MDAs and CNI

In order to ensure that protective security measures are applied by MDAs and operators of CNI, the ONS held series of engagements with MDAs to assess their compliance with protective security and conducted vulnerability and risk assessments of some MDAs and CNI including all the MDAs at the Youyi Building; all MDAs located at New England Ville; EDSA Falcon Bridge Office; Electricity Generation and Transmission Company (EGTC), Kingtom; and SLBC's New England Ville and Leicester Peak Installations. The objective of the vulnerability and risk assessment was to identify gaps in the security of the MDAs and proffer recommendations to address the gaps.

5.2 Vetting of Public Officials

In line with its statutory mandate, the ONS vetted 28 newly recruited personnel of the Sierra Leone Civil Aviation Authority (SLCAA); 22 personnel of the National Cyber Security Coordination Centre (NCSCC) and 33 applicants for small arms licence from Sierra Leone Commission on Arms and Ammunition (SLeCAA). The vetting exercise was conducted to minimize the possibility of persons with questionable background gaining employment in the public service or obtaining licence for firearms.

5.3 Coordination of Protective Security at State or Public Events

The ONS also ensured the provision of effective protective security coverage of very important state events or public functions including: the state visit of the United States Ambassador to the United Nations to the Republic of Sierra Leone from 23rd to 25th January 2024; the ECOWAS Court of Justice International Conference held in Sierra

Leone from 13th to 16th May, 2024; the state visit of the First Ladies of Nigeria, Burundi, Cape Verde and Namibia to Sierra Leone to attend the launch of the "We are Equal" campaign held from 28th June to 2nd July 2024; Single African Aviation Transport conference held in Sierra Leone from 27th to 30th July 2024; State Opening of Parliament held on 9th August 2024; International Conference of Women in Tourism from 27th to 31st October, 2024 and the state visit of the Liberian President, H. E. Joseph Boakai from 28th

to 30th November, 2024.

6.0 ENHANCEMENT OF THE ONS' PRODUCTIVITY WITH IMPROVED PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT AND DELIVERY SYSTEMS

The ONS continued to build its capacity to meet the challenges of security sector coordination in the 21st century. Against that backdrop, it recruited twenty-four (24) personnel in 2024. Its staff also participated in both local and international programs including seminar and trainings.

At international level, ONS staff benefitted from the following training programmes:

Seminar on Transnational Organized Crime focusing on 'Operation Shark', held in Senegal; Training on Managing Security Resources in West Africa, held in Togo; Experience Exchange on Border Security Management and the Initiative to establish Border Commission held in Ghana; a Study Tour on Disaster Risk Financing Implementation at Country Level covering Malawi, Mozambique and South Africa; Training on Cyber security focusing on Analysis on Open Source Investigation and Threat Assessment held in Morocco; Training on Counter-terrorism focusing on Ethical Questioning and Elicitation Techniques; and Counter- Terrorism Fusion Cell Management held in Morocco.

At the local level, personnel benefitted from customized training programs on specific professional areas including Human Resource Management, Monitoring and Evaluation, and Internal Audit Systems provided by IPAM- University of Sierra Leone, with support from the Government of Sierra Leone. The First Yumaj Nigeria Limited trained thirty (30) personnel in Leadership; Cyber Security; Use of Drone; and Basic ICT programs.

The seminars and training programs at both international and local levels boosted the capacity of personnel on cyber security, resource management, experience-sharing among security sector institutions, drone management and further strengthened the institution's coordinating role within the security sector and with other partners.

7.0 IMPLEMENTATION OF POLICIES AND STRATEGIES RELATING TO NATIONAL SECURITY

In order to enhance the effectiveness of security sector institutions, the ONS led the preparation, review or implementation of security sector policies, legislations and standard operating procedures. During the reporting period, the National Security Policy and Strategy (NSPS) was launched by His Excellency Brigadier (Rtd) Dr Julius Maada Bio and plans were underway to commence its implementation; the Standard Response Guidelines for the National Security Architecture (SRGNSA), the Military Aid to Civil Authority (MACA) and the Sierra Leone Counter-Terrorism Strategy and its Implementation Plan were reviewed; whilst the Standard Operating Procedures on

Handling of Organized Crime-related Exhibits; the Standard Operating Procedure on the Harmonization of the Registration of Financial and Other Businesses (which was signed by the Heads of the NIB, BSL and FIA); and the National Threat Assessment (NTA) 2024 – 2025 and National Intelligence Requirements (NIR) were prepared.

8.0 REGULATION OF PRIVATE SECURITY COMPANIES

The ONS has the responsibility to register, license and regulate the operation of private security companies (PSCs) in Sierra Leone. In 2024, the ONS registered and licensed eighty-three (83) PSCs. Out of the 83 PSCs, five (5) were Class A PSCs (owned by non Sierra Leoneans) whilst seventy-eight (78) were Class B PSCs (owned by Sierra Leoneans) making up 6.0% and 94% respectively of the PSCs registered. Through effective regulation, the ONS contributed to the the Consolidated Revenue Fund (CRF), the sum of **One Million, One hundred and Seventy-four Thousand Leones (NLe. 1,174,000)** from PSC operational licence fees. The table below shows the registration and licensing of both old and new Class A and Class B PSCs in 2024.

Category of PSC	Licence Registration		
	New	Old	Total
Class A	2	3	05
Class B	16	62	78
Total	18	65	**83**

Figure 29: Registered and Licensed PSCs

9.0 STRENGTHENING STRATEGIC COMMUNICATIONS CAPABILITIES OF THE ONS

9.1 Forestalling Attempts to Use the Social Media to Undermine the Security Sector and National Security

In 2024, the security sector contended with threats posed to national security by the misuse of the social media by people who propagated hate messages, tribal diatribes and deliberate misinformation and disinformation about the operations of the security services and the Government with intent to incite public unrest, create an atmosphere of chaos and insecurity, thereby undermining public trust and confidence in the security services.

In order to forestall the use of social media to undermine the integrity and professionalism of the security sector, the ONS coordinated the Security Sector Strategic Communications to proactively communicate security sector activities/programs as well as its views/positions on certain developments through media engagements, public outreach, and Press Releases which were disseminated via radio, television, social media and archiving on the ONS' official website.

9.2 Enhancing Public Awareness of Security Sector Activities through the ONS Website and Social Media Handles

In order to enhance public knowledge and understanding of its role in coordinating the security sector to ensure peace, stability and security, the ONS utilized its website to inform the wider public about its mandate, programs and activities thereby helping to eliminate the myths and many misconceptions held about the institution. The website was also used to disseminate security sector-wide activities and as a platform where members of the security sector and the public can access critical national security information and/or documents. Important activities of the ONS and the security sector were also posted on the ONS Twitter now X and Facebook accounts for the attention of the public.

10.0 COORDINATION OF EFFORTS TO MAINSTREAM GENDER WITHIN THE SECURITY SECTOR

GoSL enacted the Gender Equality and Women Empowerment (GEWE) Act, 2022 which obligates all MDAs to adopt gender mainstreaming and the empowerment of women as a key policy consideration. The security sector institutions including the ONS, SLP, RSLAF, NFF and SLCS have established Gender Directorates as a first step to promoting gender mainstreaming.

Violence against women and girls has been regarded as a critical threat to the safety of women and girls and States are required to take concrete steps to protect women and girls. The security sector personnel are not immune to perpetrating violence against women and girls. Thus, it was considered germane for the 2024 16 Days of Activism themed: "Towards 30 years of Beijing Declaration Platform for Action: Unite to end

Violence against Women and Girls" to be commemorated by the security sector in a different way. The ONS Directorate of Gender in collaboration with those of the RSLAF, SLP, SLCS and NFF coordinated the commemoration of the 2024, 16 Days of Activism by organizing massive awareness raising and sensitization sessions at the Benguema Military Barracks, Murray Town Military Barracks, Wilberforce Military Barracks, Juba Military Barracks, Jui Police Barracks, Kissy Police Barracks, Grafton Police Barracks, Kingtom Police Barracks, the Sierra Leone Correctional Services Barracks, the National Fire Force Training School, the National Fire Force Headquarters and the ONS Headquarters.

The security personnel and their dependants were sensitized on the following topics:

i. Reason and Brief Background for Commemoration of the 16 Days of Activism presented by representative of the RSLAF;

ii. Laws on Sexual Based Violence presented by representative of the SLP; iii. Effects of Gender Based Violence – Psycho-Social and Physical Effects presented by representative of the SLCS;

iv. Harmful Traditional Practices and Socio- Economic Norms presented by representative of the NFF**;**

v. The Role of the Security Sector Institutions in Combating Gender Based Violence and the Real Man Campaign presented by representative of the ONS.

In the course of the sensitization, it was established that most of the incidents of gender based violence in the barracks were settled and compromised by the Mammy Queens; that security personnel do violate the rights of their family members and dependants with impunity; the Gender policies of some sector institutions needed to be aligned with the National Gender and Women Empowerment Policy and there is need to sensitize the lower ranks on all the gender-related laws and policies.

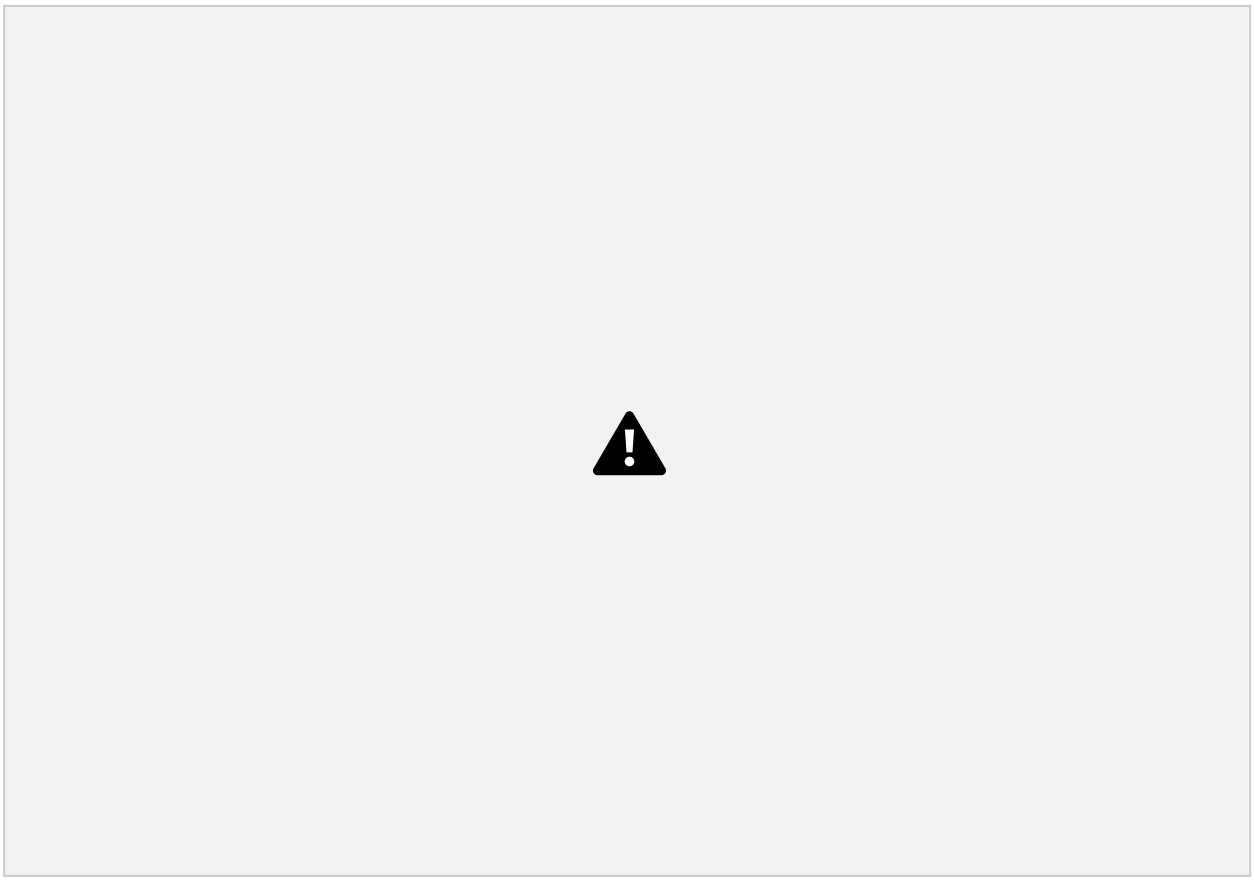


Figure 30: Representatives of the ONS, SLP, RSLAF, NFF and SLCS

11.0 MOBILIZATION OF FUNDS FOR SECTOR-WIDE OPERATIONS

The security landscape was challenged by a myriad of threats that required joint operations by the various security and intelligence institutions. The ONS, as part of its mandate, mobilized funding to support such operations including the Military Aid to Civil Power (MACP) operation, the joint patrols of the Presidential Guard Force, the Counter-Terrorism Unit at the Freetown International Airport and other special operations.

12.0 CRITICAL CHALLENGES

Notwithstanding that the ONS was able to successfully deliver on its mandate in 2024, there were some critical challenges as highlighted infra:

12.1 Non-completion of the ONS Car Park

The ONS is the hub for security sector coordination meetings that attracts stakeholders from MDAs, civil society, development partners and many others. The present parking space is insufficient to accommodate the vehicles of the large number of MDAs and other stakeholders that visit the ONS daily. Given that the available parking space could

not accommodate all the vehicles that come to the ONS daily, some are compelled to use the frontage outside the ONS perimeter fence, which continues to create congestion, untidiness and insecurity.

12.2 Delay in Release of Quarterly Allocations

Like other security sector institutions, the ONS continued to grapple with delay in the release of quarterly allocations for programmed activities. This affected timely implementation of ONS' activities in no small way in 2024.

12.3 Limited Capacity Building Opportunities

The nature of the job at the ONS requires continuous capacity building for its staff to hone their knowledge and skills, make use of new techniques and technologies, and adapt to new challenges and evolving threats. However, the institution had had limited capacity building opportunities which affected the productivity of its staff.

12.4 Inadequate and Aging Fleet

Coordination of national security requires a lot of movement, sometimes across the country. Over the years, however, the ONS has been grappling with inadequate and aging fleet. Out of 16 Provincial/District Security Coordinators, only 4 can boast of functional vehicles, though aged. Similarly, some directorates at headquarters are without vehicles. Even the buses that commute the rank and file to and from work are aged. Apart from the inconveniences caused by the inadequacy, the financial implication on repairs of these aging vehicles is astronomical. The challenge of inadequate and aging fleet continued to affect the ONS' effective coordination of the security sector in 2024.

12.5 Lack of Owned-accommodation for ONS Security Coordinators

Unlike the SLP, RSLAF and some other government institutions that have owned accommodation at regional and district levels, the ONS has been reliant on tenancy for its Provincial and District Security Coordinators. In addition to the insecurity of some of the accommodations, the tendency of some landlords to increase rent monumentally each year has necessitated frequent relocations of ONS coordinators in the provinces. Apart from the inconveniencies faced by affected coordinators, it has sometimes impacted the accessibility of the ONS as well as hampered public perception of the institution.

12.6 Limited Security Coordination at Chiefdom Level

There are 190 chiefdoms in Sierra Leone. Out of these, the ONS has 11 Chiefdom Coordinators and 32 Chiefdom Focal Persons. Consequently, the ONS is constrained to effectively coordinate security in chiefdoms where it lacks presence. This, in some way, impacts the early warning and early response mechanism of the national security architecture.

12.7 Lack of Timely Response to Early Warning Signals by MDAs

For the EWER mechanism to operate effectively, the MDAs and other institutions or authorities that should respond to the warning signals provided by the security sector must do so in a timely manner. However, in most cases, the response to the early warning signals by the MDAs has been either very weak or non-existent. This has caused some low-level incidents to escalate into full blown conflict for lack of timely response.

13.0 STRATEGIC FOCUS FOR 2025

In 2025, the ONS hopes to:

i. improve security sector coordination to prevent and respond to all threats to Sierra Leone's national security in a joint-up governance approach;

ii. collaborate with pertinent MDAs to monitor the implementation of activities relating to the Governments' development priorities as encapsulated in the MTNDP 2024 – 2030 particularly the Big Five Game Changers;

iii. strengthen the regulation of private security companies, the supervision of vetting

for security clearance of public officials and the implementation of protective security measures in Government MDAs and CNIs;

iv. enhance monitoring of the implementation of security policies/strategies/regulations and improve public/media engagement;

v. strengthen staff capacity-building and improve performance management delivery system of the ONS;

vi. coordinate the implementation of the National Security Policy and Strategy of Sierra Leone 2024;

vii. continue engagement with the Ministry of Finance (MoF) for release of funds for completion of the ONS car park;

viii. continue engagement with GoSL to procure vehicles to support ONS operations;

ix. engage GoSL to provide funding for the establishment of more CHISECs; and

x. strengthen collaboration with MDAs to provide the enabling environment for good governance, socio-economic development, poverty reduction and conflict prevention and management.

14.0 CONCLUSION

The ONS has continued, albeit in the midst of serious challenges, to provide support and secretarial services to the NSC, coordinate security and intelligence at national, provincial, district and chiefdom levels, maintain cordial and cooperative relationship between the security sector and the public, prepare and ensure the implementation of national security policies and strategies, develop and implement protective security procedures across MDAs, and collaborate with MDAs to provide the enabling environment for good governance, socio-economic development, poverty reduction and conflict prevention and management. The ONS has also continued to provide effective coordination and support to the PROSECs, DISECs and CHISECs making them more robust and responsive to emerging threats; ensure proper protection of the state's critical national infrastructure; and regulate private security companies.

Effective security sector coordination requires the appropriate capabilities including capacity building, logistical and financial support. To strengthen the gains made so far, it is important for GoSL to provide the required logistical and financial support that will enable the ONS to perform its statutory mandate more effectively and efficiently.