



OMBUDSMAN CELEBRATES

1 YEAR OF PROMOTION OF ADMINISTRATIVE

JUSTICE IN SIERRA LEONE

MAY 2, 2017 - MAY 2, 2018

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BIOGRAPHY

In March 2017, the former President, Dr. Ernest Bai Koroma appointed a reputable Human Rights Lawyer, Mr. Melron C. Nicol-Wilson, as Ombudsman of the Republic of Sierra Leone. Mr. Nicol-Wilson was appointed in accordance with the provision of Section 3 of the Ombudsman Act of 1997 (Act No.2 of 1997), for a renewable term of four years. His appointment was subsequently approved by Parliament, on the 11th April,



2017. He is the third and youngest person to be appointed as Ombudsman of the Republic of Sierra Leone.

Mr. Nicol-Wilson brings into the Office of the Ombudsman 18 years of experience in legal practice, since his call to the Sierra Leone Bar, in December 1998. He is a former Teaching Fellow at the Human Rights Institute, Columbia Law School, in New York, USA, where he worked closely with Professor Louis Henkin, in developing

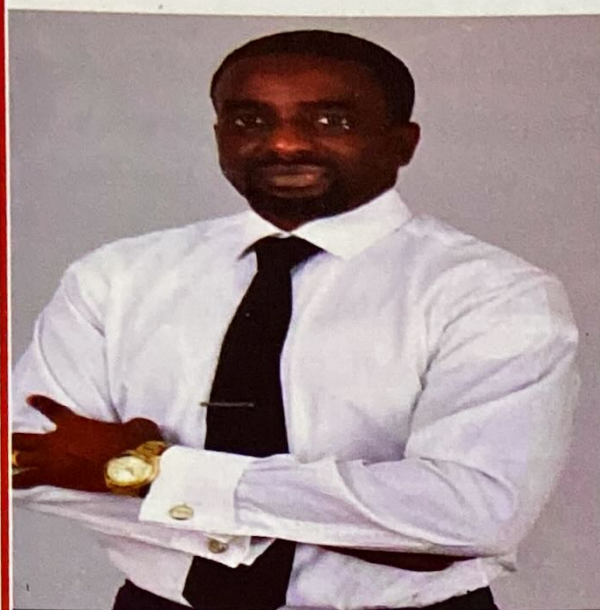
a curriculum on Human Rights Law and International Humanitarian Law, for University students in Sierra Leone. He subsequently became the first Human Rights Law lecturer at the Fourah Bay College, University of Sierra Leone.

He was a Defence Counsel and Case Manager at the United Nations backed Special Court for Sierra Leone; a former part-time lecturer in International Humanitarian Law and International Human Rights Law, at the Peace and Conflict Studies Department, Fourah Bay College, University of Sierra Leone; the first Legal Adviser of the Sierra Leone Anti-Corruption Commission; and also the first Coordinator of the Pilot National Legal Aid Scheme, in Sierra Leone which gave birth to the establishment of the Legal Aid Board.

Whilst he was the Coordinator of the Pilot National Legal Aid Scheme, he conducted feasibility studies on National Legal Aid Schemes and Ombudsmen's offices in various countries, including Ghana, South Africa, Namibia and Malawi, with a view to design an appropriate Legal Aid System and Ombudsman's office, for Sierra Leone. His report was used as the blueprint in the establishment of the Legal Aid Board in Sierra Leone.

Mr. Nicol-Wilson is the founding Director of the first Legal Aid Centre in Sierra Leone – the Lawyers Centre for Legal Assistance (LAWCLA), which fought for indigent persons to access justice.

Mr. Nicol-Wilson has worked as a Consultant for various institutions, including; the World Bank (Legal Vice Presidency) Head Office in Washington DC; the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights in Namibia; The United Nations High



Commission for Refugees in Sierra Leone; the Polytechnic of Namibia; the British Council/DFID and the European Union, in Freetown, Sierra Leone.

In 2008, he established his private Law Firm called “Malaika Chambers”, providing Civil and Criminal law practice, as well as, Legal Consultancy to various companies, organisations and individuals. At the same time, he continued to work as a Pro-Bono Counsel for the Residual Special Court for Sierra Leone, representing

various convicted persons such as, Moinina Fofanah, in contempt proceedings.

Mr. Melron Nicol-Wilson holds several degrees and Post Graduate Diploma from various universities, including; the Fourah Bay College-University of Sierra Leone, Sierra Leone Law School, University of Pretoria in South Africa, University of Nottingham in the United Kingdom, the University of Lund in Sweden and the international institute of Human Rights in Strassbourg, France.

Mr. Nicol-Wilson has several publications to his credit, including articles in the 2001 and 2002 Australian International Law Journal and the 2007 African Human Rights Law Journal. Through publications, he has championed various campaigns to reform the Sierra Leone legal system including: the campaign to give Prosecutorial powers to the Anti-Corruption Commission; the campaign against discriminatory legal provisions; the campaign to decriminalise freedom of expression, as provided for in the Public Order Act of 1965; the campaign to abolish the Death penalty; the campaign for Juvenile Justice; the campaign to create an effective Office of the Ombudsman; and the campaign for Human Rights Teaching, at the University of Sierra Leone.

He is the winner of the 2007 "African Human Rights Lawyer Award" and several other awards in Sierra Leone, including: the "2003 AWOL Lawyer of the Year Award", the "2004 Children's Advocacy Award" and the "2007 Madrugar Lawyer of the Year Award". Mr. Nicol-Wilson has always been commended for his contributions to the common good of society, and is recognised as a '**Giraffe**', by the International Giraffe Heroes Project.

Melron Nicol-Wilson has provided tutelage in various legal institutions, both within and outside his country – Sierra Leone including acting as External supervisor for masters degree students at university of Lund in Sweden. The dynamic and young legal luminary has also worked for various reputable institutions, where he offered sound professional legal services.

APPOINTMENT AND APPROVAL AS THE NEW OMBUDSMAN

The prominent Legal Luminary, Melron Nicol-Wilson, was constitutionally appointed by former President Koroma, on the 20th March 2017, to be the country's Ombudsman; replacing the Late Hon. Justice Edmond K. Cowan, the then Constitutional Review Committee's Chairman.



Handshake with the Former Ombudsman

The appointment of Lawyer Melron Nicol-Wilson, as Ombudsman, was seen by various individuals, as a very wise presidential decision, and an indication of government's commitment to the development and promotion of human rights, in Sierra Leone.

The Office of the Ombudsman is a very important entity, as it is charged with the responsibility of dealing with any administrative issues, in which public officials are involved, as long as those matters are not before a Court of Law. The Office provides redress for people of different places of work, whose rights have been violated, as well as, others that experience disadvantage and injustice, through the abuse of power and maladministration. Therefore, the former president – Dr. Ernest Bai Koroma, decided to choose the leading Human Rights Lawyer in the country to lead the institution.

The dossier on Lawyer Melron Nicol-Wilson is very impressive and speaks volumes of him, both nationally and in the international arena. As a result of his exemplary contri-

tribution to legal practice in Sierra Leone, Mr. Nicol-Wilson was funded by the United States Embassy to pursue 'The International Visitors Leadership Exchange Program', where he excelled with flying colours. Subsequently, he also gained funding from 'The Menah Pratt Family' to participate in speaking tours in 4 American Universities, including the University of Tennessee and Vanderbilt, on the challenges of setting up a social justice organisation.

Based on his sound academic credentials and wealth of experience in the justice sector, his sense of duty and devotion, coupled with his quest to protect the less privileged, Mr. Melron Nicol-Wilson was unanimously approved by Parliament, as Ombudsman; an as-



signment that he commenced on the 2nd May, 2017. Upon his approval, a long-standing member of the Judiciary submitted that, Mr. Nicol-Wilson is a vibrant Lawyer, very God-fearing person and a man of integrity, whom he believed would perform exceptionally well, as the country's Ombudsman. He further confidently intimated that, Mr. Nicol-Wilson would be the first young person to occupy that Office; praising former President Koroma for reposing trust in young people, to occupy strategic posi-

Late Justice Cowan, Ombudsman and Staff tions in Sierra Leone.

In his remarks, Melron Nicol-Wilson stated that, he felt humbled and elated by the presidential appointment and parliamentary approval. He also maintained that, as the country's new Ombudsman, he would serve with his fullest capacity, to make a significant impact on protecting and serving humanity and also in promoting good governance in Sierra Leone.

He has lived to his promises and has made significant contribution in promoting administrative justice in the last twelve months throughout the country.

TAKING UP OFFICE AND INSTITUTIONAL ASSESSMENT

Ten days after he assumed office, the Ombudsman, Mr. Melron Nicol-Wilson, conducted an Institutional Assessment, during which he visited the provincial offices in Kenema, Bo and Makeni.



Ombudsman in Kenema

During the institutional assessment, the Ombudsman met with staff of his respective offices, for the first time; and gained first-hand information about the state of affairs on the various offices of the Ombudsman.

In each provincial office, the Ombudsman held extensive discussions with the staff, on the status of complaints, and issues that required urgent action, to enhance their effectiveness and efficiency.

The key findings of the Institutional Assessment of the Office of the Ombudsman included, but not limited to:

(i) Failure by some MDAs to respond to correspondences and comply with recommendations for remedial actions, following investigations into complaints;



Ombudsman and Staff at Bo Regional Office

(ii) Inadequate personnel to undertake investigations and outreach work. There were only five investigators within the entire office of the Ombudsman.

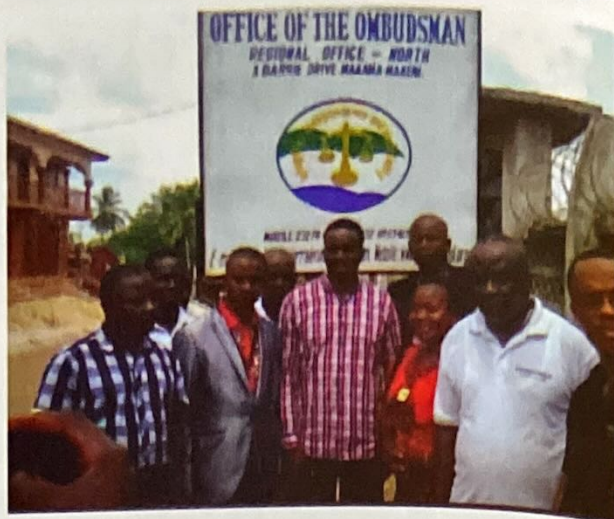
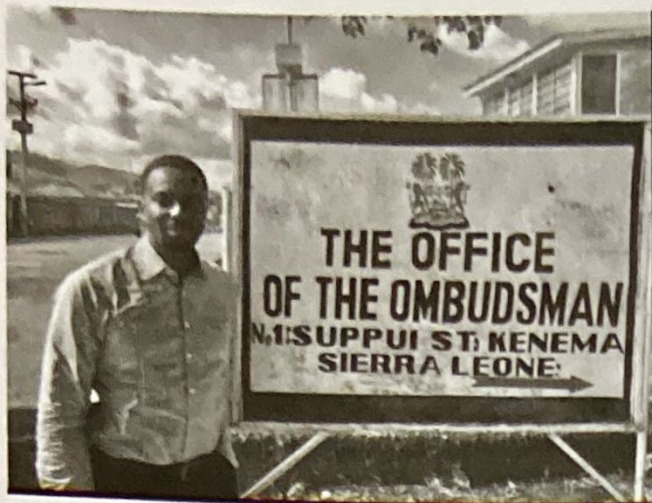
(iii) Too many backlog cases that were not resolved, which undermines public confidence in the ability of the Office to effectively resolve complaints;

(iv) Inadequate provision of vehicles to undertake investigations and outreach programmes.

(v) Inadequate Imprest to run the offices;

(vi) Unsuitable office premises, and non-availability of certain office equipment, to enhance efficiency, among others.

The findings of the Institutional Assessment formed the basis for the new strategic direction of the office of the Ombudsman.



Returning from his provincial tour, the Ombudsman immediately constituted a dedicated team to deal with backlog cases; engaged the Ministry of Finance and Economic Development, with a view to addressing the challenges his office is faced with; and also developed a 100-Day Action Plan.

The 100-Day Action Plan, according to staff of the Office of the Ombudsman did not only bring new responsibilities on staff, but also replenished their enthusiasm and motivated them to concerted work together to accomplish the new strategic direction of Ombudsman Melron Nicol-Wilson Esq.

The Ombudsman is very resolute and determined to succeed, and therefore provided the support that will empower his staff to effectively and efficiently carry out their various responsibilities; which also encouraged them to claim ownership of the Ombudsman's brilliant initiative.

PRESENTATION OF 2015 / 2016 BI- ANNUAL REPORT AND 100-DAY ACTION PLAN TO FORMER PRESIDENT DR. ERNEST BAI KOROMA

The Office of the Ombudsman is obligated to submit annual reports on its activities, to the President of the Republic of Sierra Leone. Therefore, on Thursday 8th June, 2017, the Ombudsman, Mr. Melron Nicol-Wilson, submitted a bi-annual report that he inherited from his predecessor – the Late Hon. Justice Cowan. enthusiasm to deliver on his mandate, despite the numerous challenges he highlighted. Commenting on the challenges highlighted by the Ombudsman, the former President stated that, the country was going through financial difficulties; causing delays in budgetary allocations to all sectors of the government. The former President, however,

convened a tri-partite meeting with the Ombudsman and the Minister of Finance and Economic Development, to address some of the pressing challenges of the Office of the Ombudsman.

Together with the bi-annual report of his Office, Mr. Melron Nicol-Wilson also presented his 100-Day Action Plan to the former President, which he intended to accomplish, in order to give a new strategic direction to the Office of the Ombudsman.



The former President commented that, he was impressed with the Action Plan of the Ombudsman, which he described as a sign of commitment to his new assignment and national duty. The former President also emphasised that, the work of the Ombudsman is very crucial to promoting justice and in achieving a key governance pillar of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). As such, he pointed out that, the Office of the Ombudsman needs to be supported by government, no matter the difficulties and competing financial priorities.



Ombudsman and Staff at State House

Present at the presentation ceremony were: The then Secretary to the President, Mr. Osho Coker and some staff members of the Office of the Ombudsman. They included: Dr. Sheku Conteh, Executive Secretary; Mrs. Abigail Gbo-Musa, Human Resources & Support services Manager; Mr. Alhaji Mansaray, Principal Investigator; Mr. Ishmael Jalloh, investigator; Ms. Lois Kawa, Principal Legal Officer; Mr. Minkailu Sama, Human Resources Officer; and Mr. Ajan Fofanah, who was voluntarily serving as Personal Assistant, to the Ombudsman.

RESOLUTION OF CASES

The major work of the Ombudsman is to receive, investigate and resolve complaints against Ministries, Departments, Agencies and institutions of higher learning established fully or partially with Government funds.

When Melron Nicol-Wilson took up office in May, 2017, he met a backlog of 312 cases in the institution. This backlog was created as a result of the lack of enough staff to deal with cases. For instance the Freetown Head Office had only two staff members (Investigators) working on cases and when one is on leave or sick its only one staff that works.

Upon assumption of office Melron Nicol-Wilson decided to work speedily and with the highest degree of professionalism in the resolution of cases.

He firstly recruited four new staff members (a legal officer and three Mediation Officers) to work exclusively on case files together with the two investigators in the Head Office .

Secondly, he started writing and publishing investigation reports upon completion of investigation of cases.

Thirdly, he introduced a new cadre of staff members called Intake Clerk who became the first point of contact for complaints and who also assist mediators and investigators in the resolution of cases.



Intake Clerk at the Head Office Abu Bakarr S. Jalloh

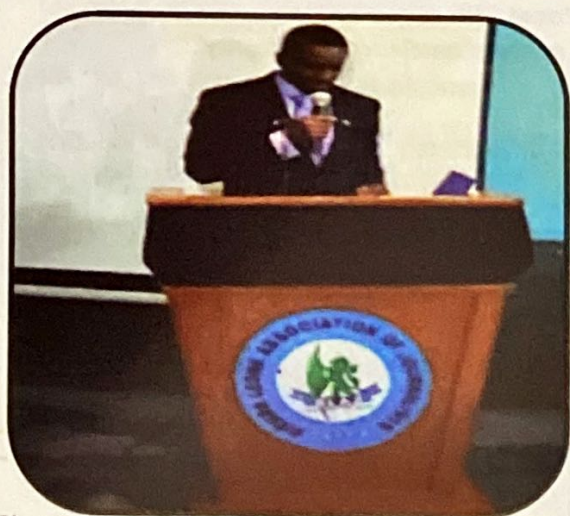
A combination of the above produced the desired results. In less than six months of taking up office he was able to resolve about 200 out of the 312 backlog cases. Also the office now has a system in place which ensures the resolution of new cases within 90 days from the date of receipt of complaints. .

Melron Considers his strategy for the resolution of cases as his biggest achievement since it has restored public confidence in the institution which was previously lacking.

MEDIA ENGAGEMENT

Melron Nicol-Wilson is a house-hold name, both in the public domain and in the Media. He has built an enduring bond with the Media, since he commenced legal practice, and during his days at LAWCLA; offering legal assistance to the disadvantaged.

Ombudsman Nicol-Wilson values the invaluable contribution of the Media, not only in deliberating issues that relate to administrative justice and human rights, but also in informing the general public about the activities of his Office. Since his appointment, as Ombudsman, he has enjoyed a continued good working relationship with both the Electronic and Print Media.



His ethos of engaging the media was demonstrated, when he convened a Press Briefing with several Media Houses, to present his 100-Days Plan of Action, to the people of Sierra Leone.

Since he assumed Office, all the activities of the Office of the Ombudsman have

been published and broadcasted, by more than one Media Houses.



Ombudsman Office Plans for Next 5 Years

Street in Freetown. The ceremony was witnessed by government officials, development partners and members of the fourth estate. Speaking to the guests and the media at the ceremony, the Ombudsman Mr. Melron Nicol-Wilson said that when he assumed office last year, he did an institutional assessment and concluded that, there was need for the relocation of the Office to a more conducive and convenient building for staff and complainants. He said that, the new building gives visibility to the Office as well as restores public confidence in the services of the Ombudsman. Declaring the Office open, the newly appointed Finance Director in the Office of the Ombudsman, Madeline Osei, expressed thanks and appreciation to the Ministry of Works and Infrastructure for approving the relocation of the Office, and the Ministry of Finance for paying the rent for the new building. Launching the Strategic Plan, the Chairman of the Human Rights Commission of Sierra Leone (HRCSL), Rev. James M. Graham, congratulated the Ombudsman and team for their efforts in developing the Strategic Plan. Rev. James



Foran appeared to the Government and Civil Society Organisations to support the work of the Ombudsman. The development of the five year strategic plan of the Ombudsman for the period 2018-2022 was made possible with the financial and technical support from the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) country office in Freetown. The plan envisions a Sierra Leone which consistently respects and upholds good governance. The mission is to

improve governance and promote the delivery of public services in Sierra Leone, by effectively responding to and preventing maladministration and the abuse of power. The strategic priorities of the Plan are: to establish and maintain a credible and respected institution; to ensure operational autonomy and financial independence; to improve accessibility and visibility to the public; and to enhance the impact of interventions on governance and the delivery of public services.

Within his Strategic Plan for 2018 – 2022, Melron has also placed a high premium on media engagement, wherein, he will be meeting with Journalists, to inform them and clarify issues that are pertinent to the functions of the Office of the Ombudsman.



The Ombudsman's 100-Day Action Plan

"Enacting the POWER of Enforcement: EMPOWER the Ombudsman to DELIVER Administrative Justice & Safeguard Human Rights"

What follows is the new Ombudsman's 100-Day Action Plan, to empower his office to deliver administrative justice and safeguard human rights, in Sierra Leone. It is the outcome of a nationwide consultation and institutional assessment, conducted by the Ombudsman, in Freetown, and the regional offices: Bo, Makeni & Kenema. The Plan focuses on enhancing public confidence, accountability, fairness and creating a new direction.

POWER PROJECT: Three measures to give enforcement POWERS to the Ombudsman to be able to demand administrative justice & safeguard human rights:

⇒ **FIRST**, consult with a group of legal experts and stakeholders to review the Ombudsman Act 1997.

⇒ **SECOND**, propose an amendment to the Ombudsman Act 1997, with a view to enact enforcement powers for the Office of the Ombudsman.

⇒ **THIRD**, develop a 5-year Strategic Plan, designed to enhance public confidence, accountability, fairness and a new direction.

⇒ **THIRD**, improve website design, commence quarterly newsletter, and develop other relevant information and communication technology to enhance the work of the Ombudsman.

DELIVER PROJECT: Three actions to DELIVER H.E. Dr. Ernest Bai Koroma's instruction to the Ombudsman to "deal with cases speedily, with the highest level of professionalism and integrity".

⇒ **FIRST**, immediately recruit additional staff including Programme, Mediation and Legal Experts, to deal with cases speedily, with the highest level of professionalism and integrity.

EMPOWER PROJECT: Three actions to EMPOWER the Office of the Ombudsman to deliver its mandate:

⇒ **FIRST**, relocate the Head Office of the Ombudsman to a more conducive environment, fit for purpose, and provide support to regional offices.

⇒ **SECOND**, design a new organogram for the Office and terms of reference for proposed units and staff, in order to develop the institution.

⇒ **SECOND**, support MDAs to create an effective internal grievance mechanism, with a view to reducing the number of complaints reported to the Ombudsman.

⇒ **THIRD**, develop and sign Memoranda of Understanding (MOU), with line institutions such as the Legal Aid Board, Anti-Corruption Commission, Ministry of Labour, Human Rights Commission, the Judiciary etc., to ensure an effective case management and referral system.



Achievements of the Ombudsman's 100-Day Action Plan

"Enacting the POWER of Enforcement: EMPOWER the Ombudsman to DELIVER Administrative Justice & Safeguard Human Rights"

The Ombudsman's 100-Day Action Plan was designed to empower his Office to deliver administrative justice and safeguard human rights, in Sierra Leone. The Action Plan that resulted from a nationwide consultation and institutional assessment, conducted by the Ombudsman, has enhanced public confidence, accountability and fairness, and created a new strategic direction for the Office of the Ombudsman.

Key Achievements of the Ombudsman following his 100-Day Action Plan

POWER PROJECT: Three Achievements in Gaining enforcement POWERS for the Ombudsman to be able to demand Administrative justice & safeguard human rights:

- ⇒ FIRST, the Ombudsman has reviewed the Ombudsman Act of 1997, in consultation with legal experts, the Sierra Leone Bar Association, Law Reform Commission and the Office of the Attorney-General & Minister of Justice.
- ⇒ SECOND, the Ombudsman has proposed amendments of sections 7(2) and 13(1) in the Ombudsman Act, including the introduction of a penalty clause for non-compliance.
- ⇒ THIRD, the Ombudsman has gained the approval of the UNDP, to support the development of a 5-year Strategic Plan that will enhance public confidence, accountability and fairness and create the new direction.

EMPOWER PROJECT: Three Achievements in EMPOWERING the Office of the Ombudsman to deliver its mandate.

- ⇒ FIRST, the Ombudsman has identified a suitable premises to relocate his Head Office and also rehabilitated the Bo Regional Office.
- ⇒ SECOND, with support from UNDP, the Office has de-

signed a new organogram and reviewed the terms of references for proposed units and staffs, in order to develop the institution.

- ⇒ THIRD, the Ombudsman's website has been redesigned into a more informative and user-friendly version; and a quarterly newsletter commenced, to inform the public about the activities of the Office.

DELIVER PROJECT: Three Achievement in DELIVERING H.E. Dr. Ernest Bai Koroma's Instruction to the Ombudsman to "deal with cases speedily, with the highest level of professionalism and integrity".

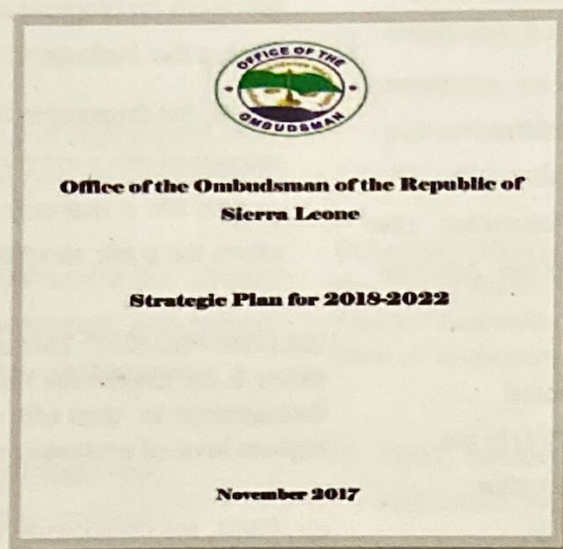
- ⇒ FIRST, the Ombudsman has recruited Legal and Mediation Officers, to deal with cases speedily, with the highest level of professionalism and integrity.
- ⇒ SECOND, the Ombudsman has obtained and reviewed the internal grievance mechanisms of some MDAs, with recommendations, so that aggrieved staff can access those mechanisms and only use the Ombudsman, as a last resort.
- ⇒ THIRD, the Ombudsman has signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the Legal Aid Board, to ensure an effective case management and referral system.

RECENT ACCOMPLISHMENTS

A NEW STRATEGIC PLAN

Mr. Melron Nicol-Wilson's assumption of Office, in May 2017, he met an obsolete Strategic Plan, for the Office of the Ombudsman. The Strategic Plan that he inherited only covered from 2012 – 2016. Hence, there was an urgent need for a new Strategic plan, which will stipulate the objectives, goals, activities and priorities of his institution.

Recognising the importance of such an operational document, the Ombudsman solicited and successfully secured the support of the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) in Sierra Leone, which provided the technical and financial assistance for the development of a new strategic plan, for 2018-2022.



This current strategic plan was jointly developed by a UNDP Consultant, with inputs from staff of the Office of the Ombudsman, and other key stakeholders, during consultative meetings and a validation workshop, taking their views and perspectives into account.

The Strategic Plan is grounded on the experiences accumulated since the establishment of the Office; that of Melron Nicol-Wilson; and his intended strategic direction of the Office of the Ombudsman.

With some guiding principles and values; and taking into cognisance some deficiencies noted in previous strategic plans, the strategic priorities of this new plan are: to establish and maintain a credible and respected Ombudsman institution; ensure operational autonomy and financial independence, while being fully accountable in the use of resources; improve accessibility and the visibility of the Ombudsman to the public; as well

as, to enhance the impact of interventions on governance and the delivery of public services.

Unlike the previous strategic plans, Mr. Melron Nicol-Wilson meticulously ensured that, the new plan has an implementation strategy, which is prudently costed, to ensure effectiveness and efficiency, and also to assure accountability in the delivery of services, and the use of resources.

With the astute leadership of Mr. Melron Nicol-Wilson, the Office of the Ombudsman now has a binding document, which will guide the operations of his institution, over the next five years.

INTRODUCTION OF NEWSLETTER PUBLICATION

Under one year in office, the ombudsman has published three newsletters, which have been widely circulated across the country. Stories ranging from the institutional assessment, intake clinics, staff recruitment and profiling, international networking and relocation to a new office building formed stories in the newsletters.



This is the Inaugural Edition of the Quarterly Newsletter of the Office of the Ombudsman

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PROFILE OF THE OMBUDSMAN

Sierra Leone has a new Ombudsman



Melron G. Nicol-Wilson, Ombudsman

He is the third and youngest person to be appointed as Ombudsman of the Republic of Sierra Leone.

Mr. Nicol-Wilson brings into the Office of the Ombudsman 18 years of experience in legal practice, since his call to the Sierra Leone Bar, in December 1998.

He is a former Teaching Fellow at the Human Rights Institute, Columbia Law School, in New York, USA, where he worked closely with Professor Louis Henkin in developing a curriculum on Human Rights Law and International Humanitarian Law for University students in Sierra Leone. He subsequently became the first Human Rights Law lecturer at the University of Sierra Leone.

He was a Defense Counsel and Chief Manager at the United Nations-backed Special Court for Sierra Leone, a former part-time lecturer in International Humanitarian Law and International Human Rights Law, at the Peace and Conflict Studies Department, Fourah Bay College, University of Sierra Leone. He is the Legal Advisor of the Sierra Leone Anti-Corruption Commission and also the first Coordinator of the First National Legal Aid Scheme, in Sierra Leone.

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Second Edition of the Quarterly Newsletter of the Office of the Ombudsman

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The Office of the Ombudsman has concluded a five-year strategic plan for the period 2018-2022, with support from the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). Country offices, in Freetown, The Plan outlines the strategic goals and vision of the new Ombudsman, Mr. Melron Nicol-Wilson, in his pursuit of administrative justice for all Sierra Leoneans, over the next five years.

The Plan which incorporates the inputs and ideas of the staff of the Office of the Ombudsman and a variety of stakeholders in the public sector, highlights the importance of the Office of the Ombudsman in enhancing public accountability in Sierra Leone. It envisages 'a Sierra Leone which consistently reports and upholds good governance'. The mission is to improve governance and promote the delivery of public services in Sierra Leone, by effectively responding to and preventing maladministration and the abuse of power.

As with the Strategic Framework of the Plan are:

- to establish and maintain a credible and respected institution;
- to ensure operational autonomy and financial independence, while being fully accountable to the use of resources;
- to improve accessibility and visibility to the public and
- to enhance the impact of interventions on governance and the delivery of public services.

The strategic goals are to have:

- a technically competent, internally reliable, efficient and effective institution;
- the Office of the Ombudsman as an autonomous and financially independent institution;
- the Office of the Ombudsman to be more visible and accessible to the public;
- the intervention of the Ombudsman impact positively on governance and service delivery.

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In January 2018, the Office of the Ombudsman relocated to its new office building at 30, Chatterbox Street in Freetown. The new office which is a modern three-story structure of the old building with 20 rooms includes a conference room and a book house for donors and other support staff.

The building was acquired in order to accommodate the increasing number of staff of the Office of the Ombudsman. In 2013, the number of staff of the Office of the Ombudsman in Freetown increased from 10 to 15. The building also gives the Office the required visibility as it is centrally located in the heart of the business district of Freetown.

The new office space is in addition of the premises made by the Ombudsman Mr. Melron Nicol-Wilson in his 100-Day Plan of Action upon assuming office in May 2017. In the Plan, Mr. Nicol-Wilson committed himself to relocating the head office of the Office of the

Continued on page 3

NEW DIVISIONS, STAFFING AND ORGANOGRAM

Immediately he assumed Office, Mr. Melron Nicol-Wilson envisaged that, the Office of the Ombudsman will function better in specialised divisions and units. However, he noted that, there are inadequate personnel to effectively and efficiently carry out the functions of his mandate.

The Ombudsman's inclination and observation was buttressed by findings from his institutional assessment. The newly developed Strategic Plan of the Office also highlighted the need to increase the staff complement of the Office of the Ombudsman.

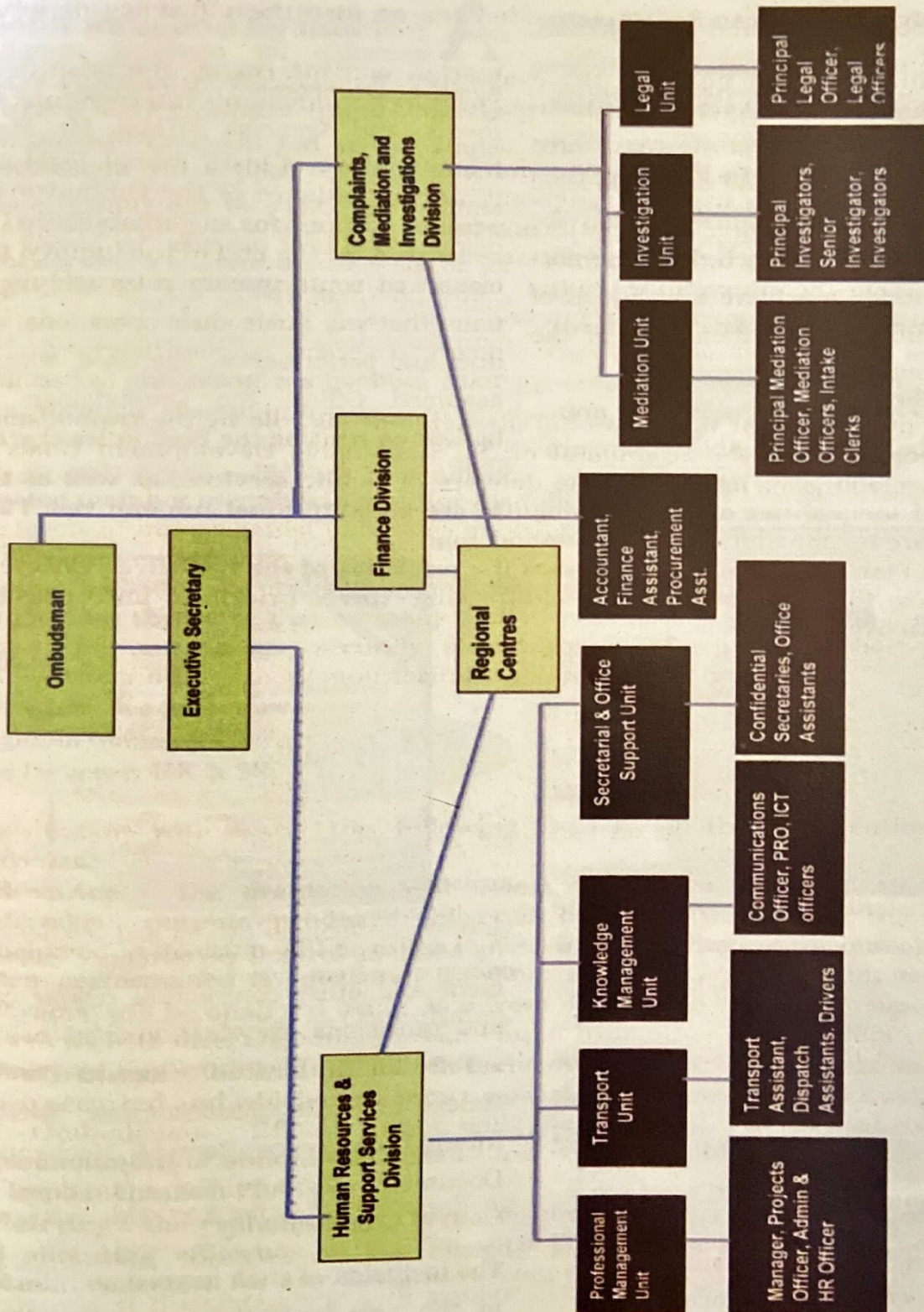
In view of this, the Ombudsman has increased the number of staffing from 35 to 55, to serve his Head Quarter and regional offices. By virtue of the Strategic Plan, the Office has been restructured and new positions have also been introduced to strengthen the workforce of the Ombudsman.

To enhance the new strategic direction of Mr. Nicol-Wilson, the office has been administratively structured into three main divisions and seven units: Complaints, Mediation & Investigations, Human Resources & Support Services and Finance Divisions; and the Professional Management, Transport, Knowledge Management, Secretarial & Office Support, Mediation, Investigation and Legal Units.

By increasing the staff complement and employing staffs that are trained in the relevant professional skills and expertise, Mr. Melron Nicol-Wilson has significantly contributed to establishing and maintaining a technically competent, internally cohesive, efficient and effective institution.

Notably, his new administrative structure has developed a culture of teamwork, provided support to programmes and enhanced collaboration among staff at the office; as reflected in his new organogram.

THE NEW ORGANOGRAM OF THE OFFICE OF THE OMBUDSMAN



GENDER EMPOWERMENT

Since the appointment of the Ombudsman, Mr. Melron Nicol-Wilson, he has made significant impact in the area of gender empowerment, within the institution. His first batch of recruits were three female mediation officer and one male legal officer. Melron Nicol-Wilson's passion for gender empowerment goes beyond the normal, as he seeks to achieve a high level of success within the Mediation Unit of the office of the ombudsman.

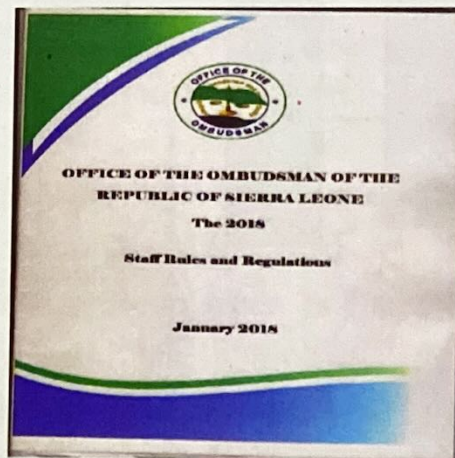
The three newly recruited mediators are: Mamie Fomba, Hawanatu Abigail Bangura and Ade -Kumbi Emeline Renner;



and also his recent employment of Ms. Madeline O'Neil, as Finance Director.

NEW STAFF RULES AND REGULATIONS

As an institution that is primarily responsible for resolving complaints against Government Ministries, Departments, and Agencies (MDAs), Mr. Melron Nicol-Wilson considers the imperative for staff of the Office of the Ombudsman to demonstrate best practice, by having judicious and contemporary rules and regulations that will guide their operations, conduct and performance. Therefore, when he assumed Office, the Ombudsman embarked on revising the Staff Rules and Regulations of the Office of the Ombudsman, for 2018 - 2022.



In addition to staff performance management and other contractual requirements and provisions, the Ombudsman has ensured that the revised edition of the Staff Rules and Regulations now includes Internal Grievance Redress Mechanisms, Documents Management and Filing, and Oath of Confidentiality.

The inclusion of such important features in the new Staff Rules and Regulations demonstrates that, Mr. Nicol-Wilson is very

keen about protecting his staff and preserving the confidentiality of aggrieved persons that access his services.

To protect his staff, staffs have been given an opportunity to report their grievances, and have a Right of Appeal to the Ombudsman, against decisions and recommendations that are not deemed to be dispassionate; all files relating to complaints and other correspondences are now securely stored for a period of 7 years; and staffs at the Office of the Ombudsman are now prohibited from divulging or publishing confidential information, without an official sanction.

The revised edition, entitled **'The 2018 Staff Rules and Regulations'**, has been in operation since January, this year, and is providing guidance to staff of the Office, in promoting administrative justice and good governance in Sierra Leone.

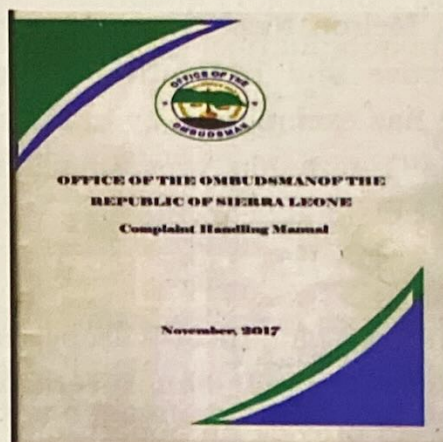
COMPLAINTS HANDLING MANUAL

Right from the commencement of his national duty as Ombudsman, Melron Nicol-Wilson has shown dedication not only to champion administrative justice, but also to safeguard human rights. As Ombudsman, he feels that it is worthy to empathise with aggrieved persons, who cannot afford the means for legal redress and assistance.

To register his commitment to resolving complaints, Mr. Nicol-Wilson has signed 'Memoranda of Understanding' with similar institutions, to ensure that cases are appro-

priately referred and handled.

With his mandate to investigate the actions and omissions of Government Ministries, Departments and Agencies, Mr. Nicol-Wilson has delegated his Legal Unit to identify all MDAs that may require their internal grievance redress mechanisms to be reviewed and upgraded. By creating such a collaborative and supportive relationship, Mr. Nicol-Wilson has ensured that his interventions impact positively on governance and service delivery.



When the Ombudsman assumed Office, in May 2017, the Office of the Ombudsman had no standard procedure for handling complaints. Although complaints were being received and handled, Mr. Nicol-Wilson realised the potential of deliberating on complaints outside the precepts of administrative justice. He has, therefore, ensured the development of a Complaints Handling Manual for his Office.

Under his stewardship, the compliant manual designed clearly dictates the procedures for receiving complaints; how to acknowledge and notify complainants and respondents; how complaints should be assessed and mediated; when complaints

should be investigated; and the steps to follow before the closure of an investigation.

This thoughtful approach of Ombudsman Nicol-Wilson has empowered the Office of the Ombudsman to achieve consistency in complaints handling; and also in keeping up with the Office's promotion of fairness, integrity, respect and administrative excellence in the public sector.

INTERNSHIP PROGRAMME

Mr. Melron Nicol-Wilson is a very proactive and innovative Ombudsman. This, he has exemplified, by introducing the first ever Internship programme at the Office of the Ombudsman.

According to Mr. Nicol-Wilson, he introduced **'The Ombudsman Internship Programme'** to provide an opportunity for students and new graduates, who are unable to find remunerated work/job, to gain valuable experiences, recommendations and even future job placements and employment opportunities, within meaningful institutions.

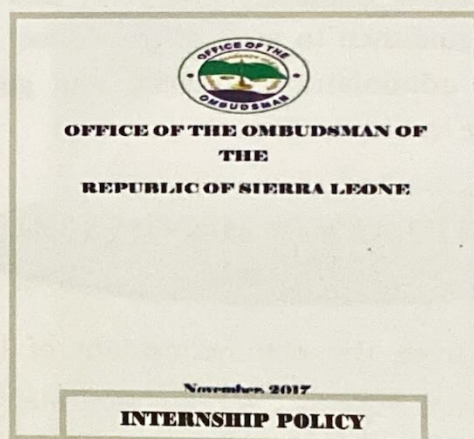
Notably, the Labour market cannot necessarily provide enough employment opportunities to meet the demands of job-seekers. Through Mr. Nicol-Wilson, the Office of the Ombudsman Internship Programme has

become an optional and valuable avenue for such persons to consolidate their learning experiences; utilise their time in a learning environment; and gain new hands-on experience; to prepare themselves for future gainful employment or other related engage-

ments.

The Ombudsman maintains that his Internship Programme is a gesture of goodwill, in order to contribute to developing the workforce for sustainable development; by promoting learning for people that are not gainfully employed, as well as, those that are interested in the functions of the Ombudsman.

Persons with an interest in the work of the Ombudsman are highly encouraged to apply for the Internship Programme; and when successful, are placed within the various divisions of the Ombudsman's offices in Freetown, Bo, Kenema, Makeni and Port Loko.



When and where applicable, interns are placed in their regional areas and disciplines of interest and/or competence; and may be relocated to other areas, in order to accord them the opportunity to acquire new knowledge and experiences.

Internship at the Office of the Ombudsman can range from a minimum of one month, to a maximum of six months, or as determined by the Ombudsman. This enables

an Intern to participate in the activities of the Ombudsman, gain on-the-job training experience, and to integrate that experience with education, career development and/or public service.

The Ombudsman is fully committed to the Internship Programme, and therefore, provides the necessary support for the internship-relationship to be cordial and productive. The programme is structured, directed and supported by guidelines; giving interns an opportunity to be mentored by well experienced and dedicated staff, within the Divisions and Units of the Office of the Ombudsman.

Mr. Nicol-Wilson recognises evaluation as an important aspect of an intern's development; and how it creates an opportunity to identify the strengths and weaknesses of interns. Therefore, the overall internship experience is evaluated, as this feedback is not only prudent for making necessary improvements to the Internship Programme, but also, for recognising those Divisions / Units that provide outstanding learning opportunities for Interns; for the attention of the Ombudsman.

On the whole, the Ombudsman internship programme has provided an opportunity for graduates to consolidate their experiences, as well as, to contribute to the new strategic direction of the Office of the Ombudsman.

While the Office of the Ombudsman may benefit from the contributions of committed and creative Interns, the internship experience also provides the opportunity for Interns to apply their knowledge and skills in a carefully planned and monitored work environment; as well as, to have contact with people that can help guide their career path, as they make their way into different walks of life.

CONDUCTIVE WORK ENVIRONMENT

When he was appointed Ombudsman, Melron Nicol Wilson noted from his institutional assessment that, the premises of the Office of the Ombudsman were unsuitable for work; thereby negatively impacting on efficiency and staff performance. He was, therefore, at the outset, determined to transform the infrastructure into an office that is **'Fit for Purpose'**.



Old Head Office



New Head Office

The Head Office of the Ombudsman was operating at 23 Liverpool Street - a two-storey building, which was barely enough to accommodate staff. Today, Mr. Nicol-Wilson has successfully relocated that Office to 26 Charlotte Street - a four-storey building, which is safer and fit for purpose. His new Office provides descent accommodation for all Divisions and Units; is carpeted, furnished with modern furniture and fully air-conditioned, to provide a conducive work environment for all staff. Through his negotiation skills, Mr. Nicol-Wilson has ensured that, the rent paid for the present office is the same as that of the previous office at Liverpool street.

Under Melron's stewardship, the regional offices have also been renovated in Bo and equipped to ensure that, they all operate in a conducive working environment, to enhance effectiveness and efficiency.

The provision of such conducive work environment, by Mr. Nicol-Wilson, has significantly improved staff morale and Team Work; and the performance of the staff of the Office of the Ombudsman has been exceptionally high. This is reflected in the nature and number of cases that the Office has successfully resolved, under the stewardship of Mr. Melron Nicol-Wilson.

OPENING OF THE OMBUDSMAN'S NORTH-WEST REGIONAL OFFICE

As a result of the recent boundary delimitation exercise, the Parliament of Sierra Leone decided to create a new province, called 'The North-West Province', covering Port Loko, Kambia and Karene Districts.

Prior to this development, the Offices of the Ombudsman only existed in Freetown, and also in Bo, Kenema and Makeni, which receive and handle complaints from aggrieved persons in the capital of Freetown, the Southern, Eastern and Northern Provinces.



The Ombudsman's Regional Office in Port Loko

In view of the above, Mr. Melron Nicol-Wilson realised that the absence of his services in the newly created North-Western Province is marginalising and depriving people in the region of an avenue to refer their complaints. In retrospect, the Ombudsman also recognised that, this is also impacting on the visibility of his Office.

To remedy the situation and to ensure that his services are inclusive, Mr. Melron Nicol-Wilson has opened a new office, situated at 23 Kambia Highway, in Port Loko Town, to serve the North-West region.

The Office is a newly constructed two storey building, with solar energy and is fully furnished, to provide a conducive work environment for the North-West Regional staff. The office will be formally opened on 4th May 2018.

The opening of an Ombudsman Office in Port Loko will be a laudable manifestation that, Mr. Nicol-Wilson is fully committed to serving and providing redress to people of all regions in Sierra Leone.

INTRODUCTION OF SUPPORT STAFF UNIFORMS

Before the appointment of Mr. Melron Nicol-Wilson, the public had no way of identifying staff that work for the Office of the Ombudsman. This had often reduced accessibility and the visibility of the Ombudsman to the public. Therefore, to improve the image of the institution, the Ombudsman has introduced immaculate uniforms for the Support Staffs, at his Head Office, and also in all his regional offices in Bo, Kenema and Makeni.



Support Staff at Freetown Office



Support Staff at Bo Office

The uniforms provided for support staff display the flag of Sierra Leone and the Ombudsman's logo and colours. This has not only helped to rebrand and differentiate the institution, but has also made the employees more identifiable to the public. Such visibility has increased accessibility to the Ombudsman's services, as the Support Staffs contribute to serving as walking bill-boards that can be approached, for information and advice, by persons that need to contact the Ombudsman.

According to the staff, the introduction of uniforms, by Mr. Nicol-Wilson, has benefited them immensely, not only in making substantial savings, but also in managing their time.

Since Ombudsman Nicol-Wilson introduced staff uniforms, a sense of team spirit and belonging has been fostered, and the productivity of the Support Staffs in the Office of the Ombudsman has significantly improved.



Support Staff at Kenema Office



Support Staff at Makeni Office

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

The importance of information technology in administration cannot be underestimated; as it does not only improve communication, but also facilitates the storing and retrieving of information for operational use.

Upon assumption of Office, Mr. Melron Nicol-Wilson noted that, the information technology systems in the Office of the Ombudsman were not commensurate to the needs of his Office. He, therefore, thought is necessary to improve the systems, in line with modern technological trend.

Under his stewardship, the website of the Office of the Ombudsman has been redesigned into a more informative and user-friendly version, not only to staff, but also to the general public and persons that are aggrieved.

Presently, complaints can now be lodged online, for the attention of the Investigation Team. The Office has also benefitted from increased number of computers; meaning that, staff at the Head and regional offices, have more access to computers to carry out their respective duties; as well as, to gain access to internet connections, aided by T.P. Link routers.

Before now, staff used to spend pressing time along corridors, and up and down the stairs, to access their workmates and or to attend to urgent queries. All that has ended, by the installation of an intercom system, which has significantly improved voice communication within the Office. CCTV monitors, which transmit and capture images have also been installed within the office. This demonstrates that Mr. Nicol-Wilson is very keen

about the safety of staff and visitors, and the security of properties belonging to the Office of the Ombudsman.

Under the stewardship of Mr. Nicol-Wilson, the Head Office of the Ombudsman now has a biometric signing-in system, which stores unique identifiers and finger prints of staff. In addition to the reduction of paper trails, the system has helped to enhance punctuality, as encouraged by the new government of Sierra Leone.

DOMESTIC CONNECTIONS

The Ombudsman, Mr. Melron Nicol-Wilson, knows the significance of gaining the invaluable support of domestic partners in development. For him, due to their proximity, these partners have a crucial role to play in promoting good governance in Sierra Leone.

In view of his conviction, Mr. Nicol-Wilson established connections with the British High Commissioner, His Excellency Guy Warrington;



as well as, His Excellency Wu Peng, the Chinese Ambassador to Sierra Leone.

The Ombudsman has been very successful in informing the Ambassadors about their contribution in enhancing good governance and the maintenance of peace and security. As such, he had discussed issues of bi-lateral relations with them, and possible ways of supporting his Office. Further to that, the Ombudsman had explored the possibility of working together, with the two countries, in the area of good governance.

From the domestic connections that the Ombudsman had established, he had gained the support of the British High Commissioner in the areas of institutional development and staff capacity building, by securing an assurance of obtaining scholarships for staff of the Office of the Ombudsman; and possible funding and technical support, from the Depart-

ment for International Development; while the Chinese Ambassador had pledged to engage in exchange programmes with his Office. By doing so, the Ombudsman has laid a solid foundation for a supportive relationship, which will improve the competence of his staff, and also for increased support for his Office and the people of Sierra Leone.



In addition, Mr. Melron Nicol-Wilson had also established connections with Heads of Diplomatic Missions, Non-governmental and Civil Society Organisations in Sierra Leone. This will hopefully help his Office to solicit assistance for areas that are not adequately supported; and to harness their invaluable contributions in assuring administrative justice in Sierra Leone.

As the Office of the Ombudsman is directly under the Office of the President, Mr. Nicol-Wilson has been in a professional and cordial working relationship with the Ministry of Finance and Economic Development, in order to acquaint the government about the financial challenges of his Office, and how he could be supported to deliver his mandate, amidst the current competing financial priorities.

INTERNATIONAL NETWORKING

The erudite Legal Luminary, Ombudsman Melron Nicol-Wilson, has initiated and maintained very good and promising networks with key international institutions and fellow Ombudsmen.

Upon assumption of Office, Mr. Melron Nicol-Wilson conceived that, the unsurpassed approach to developing the Office of the Ombudsman is, to engage with credible key players and similar institutions, around the globe.

The Ombudsman, Mr. Nicol-Wilson, has therefore established a collaborative relationship and partnership with the Swedish, Danish, Malawian and the Ombudsman of Belize, in

the Caribbean. The Ombudsman has also established strong links with the United Nations Development Program (UNDP), UK Department for International Development, the European Union, World Bank, Open Society Initiative for West Africa (OSIWA) and other supportive and influential bodies, including the International Ombudsmen Institute (IOI); and has also recently engaged with the British Commonwealth Office.

This collaboration with strategic partners at regional and international level has facilitated the acquisition of new knowledge and skills, which have contributed to the development of his new strategic direction and the accomplishment of the enhanced outcomes of the Office of the Ombudsman.

With no iota of uncertainty, the Ombudsmen in Sweden, Denmark, Malawi and the Belize are well experienced in Operational Research, Programming, Advocacy, and Resource Mobilisation.

International institutions continue to serve as partners in development, especially in promoting good governance. Therefore, the brilliant initiative of Mr. Nicol-Wilson to building and nurturing relationships with such institutions and Actors has enabled the Office of the Ombudsman to network, identify and realise opportunities that have led to the development of services that are more accessible, accountable and fair, as enshrined in its mission.



Considering the current economic climate, the Office of the Ombudsman is hoping that, maintaining relationships with current and prospective partners will not only create opportunities for Sierra Leone to be represented at key regional and global platforms; be a partner in major international Ombudsmen projects and alliances; but will also stay abreast with international Ombudsmen issues, to inform strategy; and allow for the effective management of systems and processes, as well as, the delivery of its mandate.

On the whole, the international networks initiated and established by Ombudsman Melron Nicol-Wilson will foster bi-lateral relations, provide an impetus for benchmarking and institutional development, and will contribute to promoting good governance in Sierra Leone.



SERVICE DELIVERY CHARTER

The services of the Ombudsman aim for the highest quality, to be open to scrutiny and accountability. As such, the Office has developed this Service Charter against which our services can be measured.

Our Mandate

To investigate and take actions that will resolve complaints from members of the public, who have suffered injustice as a result of maladministration, by government and its agencies.

Our Mission

The Office of the Ombudsman safeguards the community in its dealings with government and its agencies in Sierra Leone, by independent and impartial investigation and resolution of complaints.

A Sierra Leone, where administrative action by government and its agencies is fair, effective, efficient and accountable

We Promise that:

- ◆ We will act in accordance with the Ombudsman Act, 1997
- ◆ We will deal with your complaint free of charge
- ◆ We will treat you fairly and with respect
- ◆ You will be given the right to be heard, during the complaint process
- ◆ Our actions with regard to your complaint will be balanced; taking into account all available evidence
- ◆ We will explain our decisions and reasons to you
- ◆ We can review any decision or conclusion we have reached about a complaint, upon a valid request.

In instances where service delivery is perceived to be inefficient or ineffective, a report may be forwarded to the Executive Secretary or the Ombudsman.

For All enquiries, please contact us on: +232 76 945 926

OFFICE OF THE OMBUDSMAN SERVICE DELIVERY STANDARDS AND TIMELINES

Services	Standard Practice	Charges	Timeline
Receipt of Complaints	You can lodge a complaint in person, in writing, by telephone, via email or drop a letter in our Complaint Boxes at the Prisons or District Council Offices. Our officers will record your complaint, even if you cannot read or write.	Free	Immediately
Acknowledgment	We will register, file and acknowledge receipt of your complaint.	Free	Within five working days from the date of receipt
Assessment	We will examine your complaint to determine the appropriate line of action to resolve it. After which, you would be informed about our decision or line of action.	Free	Within five working days from the date of receipt
Referrals	If your complaint does not fall within our mandate, we will refer your case to the appropriate agency or authority or advise you on an appropriate remedy.	Free	Within five working days from the date of receipt
Contacting Respondents	We will forward your complaint, as written or recorded, to the agency or authority against whom you have complained, for a response. (Section (10) (2) of the Ombudsman Act, 1997)	Free	Within ten working days from the date of receipt
Feedback	You would be informed about the reply of the respondent.	Free	Within five working days from the date of receipt
Mediation	Upon examination of the available evidence; and where it is deemed an appropriate remedy, we will facilitate negotiation (s) between the complainant and the respondent. (Section (7) (1) (b) (i) of the Ombudsman Act, 1997)	Free	Within twenty working Days upon receipt of Reply
Investigation Report	Where your complaint cannot be resolved through contacts or mediation, we will investigate fully and write a report on our findings, with recommendations for remedial actions. A report will be forwarded to the Head or Minister responsible for the agency you complained against. (Section (7) (1) (b) (ii) of the Ombudsman Act, 1997)	Free	Within thirty working days from the date you were notified of the investigation
Follow-up on Investigation Report	We will engage the Head, or the Board, or the Minister responsible for the department investigated on our report, to ensure compliance with our recommendations. (Section (13) (1) Of the Ombudsman Act, 1997).	Free	Continuous
Letter to the President about a Complaint	Where the department fails to comply with our recommendations; and where it is deemed as the only option left to resolve the complaint, the Ombudsman will write to HE the President for necessary action. (Section (13) (3) of the Ombudsman Act, 1997)	Free	Within one year from date the report was forwarded to the Head or Minister.
Report to Parliament about a Complaint	Where HE the President could not act on a report forwarded to him within 90 days, the Ombudsman will refer the matter to the Speaker of Parliament, for necessary action. (Section (14) of the Ombudsman Act, 1997).	Free	After three months from the date the report was forwarded to the President

Head Office

26 Charlotte Street,
Freetown.

Phone No: +232 76 945 926 / +232 88 585748

Emails: enquiries@ombudsman.gov.sl

Website: www.ombudsman.gov.sl

Regional Offices

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Kenema: 1 Supul Street. Phone No: +232 76 844 762

Makeni: 1 Barrie Drive, Makama. Phone No: +232 76 654 600

Port Loko: 23 Kambia Highway Phone No: +232 88650 007

