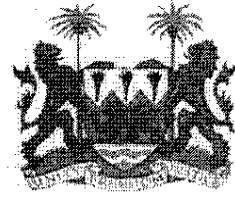




**United Nations Office of the  
Special Adviser on Africa**



**Government of Sierra Leone**

**CONFERENCE ON DISARMAMENT, DEMOBILISATION,  
REINTEGRATION (DDR) AND  
STABILITY IN AFRICA**

**Welcome Address**

**by Under-Secretary-General and Special Adviser on Africa  
Professor Ibrahim Gambari**

**Freetown, 21 June, 2005**

Your Excellency, Mr. President of the Republic of Sierra Leone,  
Excellencies,  
Members of the Diplomatic Corps,  
Distinguished Delegates/Participants of the Conference on Disarmament,  
Demobilization, Reintegration (DDR) and Stability in Africa  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

On behalf of the Under-Secretary-General, Ibrahim Gambari, it is an honour and a great pleasure for me to welcome you to this important Conference. Prof. Gambari has just been appointed by the Secretary-General as the new Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs. Because of the urgent work in connection with his new duties, he cannot be with us. He sends his deepest regrets, and will keenly await the results of our deliberations. He asked me to present this address on his behalf.

Before I proceed to brief you on the genesis of this Conference I would first like to praise the National Dance Troup for its wonderful performance. I would also like to take a moment to thank the Government of Sierra Leone for accepting to co-organise and host this Conference with the United Nations Office of the Special Adviser on Africa. Notwithstanding the great constraints faced by the Government of a country recovering from conflict, the Government of the Republic of Sierra Leone has gone way beyond its call of duty – by putting this wonderful conference hall at our disposal, reserving the country's best hotels for participants, supporting this Conference with an impressive number of competent and efficient staff involved from the planning stage to secretariat support, and above all by

receiving us at the airport and making our stay here in Sierra Leone incredibly easy and comfortable. On behalf of the United Nations, allow me, Mr. President, to express our deep appreciation once again.

Let me also use this opportunity to thank our other partners without whom the Conference could not have taken place. I would particularly like to thank the Governments of Sweden, Germany and Finland for generously providing financial resources that allowed us to organize the Conference.

The strong and relentless support of the United Nations Country Team in the organization and preparation of this Conference has been a clear case of a successful partnership. Our special thanks go to UNAMSIL and the UNDP Country Office for providing substantive, logistical and administrative support. I would also like to thank UNICEF, WFP and UNHCR for providing vehicles and drivers for participants. To all who participated in the preparation of this Conference directly or indirectly we say thank you from the bottom of our hearts.

As you are aware the SG accords the highest priority to issues related to peace and stability in Africa of which DDR is a major component. A recent report of the Secretary-General's High-level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change notes that “demobilizing combatants is the single most important factor determining the success of peace operations. Without demobilization, civil wars cannot be brought to an end and other critical goals – such as democratization, justice and development – have little chance for success.”

For good reasons, DDR programmes had placed emphasis primarily on the disarmament and demobilization of ex-combatants. However, lasting and durable peace requires more than the disarming and demobilization of ex-combatants. The greater challenge is how to integrate them into well-functioning and well-governed societies that offer attractive long-term opportunities and benefits for all citizens, particularly the youth. Hence, the SG believes that reintegration cannot be separated from the broader efforts of post-conflict reconstruction, durable peace and sustainable development.

**Background and Context:** The inspiration for this Conference grew out of a Ministerial Round Table Breakfast entitled *'Do Current Practices of Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration Lead to Stability and Development in Africa?'* organised by my Office, OSAA, during the UN ECOSOC High-Level Segment on 29 June 2004. With the encouragement of some donor countries, the Round Table proposed the organisation of a Conference in Africa to examine in greater depth the issues of disarmament, demobilisation, reintegration in relation to the broader challenge of stability in Africa. As mentioned before, the Conference is co-organised by the Government of Sierra Leone and the United Nations Office of the Special Adviser on Africa (OSAA). Both will co-chair this Conference and I am deeply honoured and grateful that the President of the Republic of Sierra Leone, H.E. Alhaji Dr. Ahmad Tejan Kabbah will deliver the Opening Address.

This Conference complements two other international initiatives aimed at improving DDR programmes and policy: the UN Inter-Agency Working

Group (IAWG) on DDR which seeks to improve the way the UN collectively designs, implements and monitors DDR programmes and the Stockholm Initiative on DDR (SIDDR) which focuses on funding, political and peacebuilding aspects of DDR. It is my great pleasure to welcome chairs of both initiatives to this Conference. Both will make presentations later this afternoon as well as lead networking sessions on Thursday. I think this is a clear sign of the strong level of cooperation that has been established between OSAA and the two related processes in the pursuit of enhancing DDR programmes.

**UN Coordination:** Through a UN Inter-Agency Task Force, established by OSAA, we have promoted a coordinated UN approach in the preparation and realisation of the Conference. The Task Force comprises UNDP, DPKO, OCHA, DDA and the World Bank. The Permanent Mission of Sierra Leone to the UN is also part of the Task Force. OSAA chairs the Task Force and provides it with secretarial support. This Task Force is complemented by a Planning Committee that has been set up by the Government of Sierra Leone in Freetown.

**Focus:** The Conference will largely focus on African perspectives on DDR from the viewpoint of stakeholders of affected countries.

**Objective:** The overall objective of the Conference is to review the challenges of DDR programmes, examine the extent to which current practices of DDR programmes genuinely lead to stability and development as well as identify the necessary preconditions for success.

The Conference will, inter alia, enlist and register the views of African DDR stakeholders on the challenges of DDR and stability; provide a platform for African perspectives to be articulated and to be incorporated into current DDR reform debates, provide a forum for African DDR stakeholders and practitioners to build networks.

In this regard, pre-Conference national consultations were held in Angola, Burundi, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Liberia, Mozambique, Rwanda, Sierra Leone and Zimbabwe. It is my great pleasure to congratulate all eight countries for holding successful national consultations on DDR and for sharing with us their DDR experiences, lessons and recommendations in the form of national papers to be presented later today. Many other African countries have equally rich experiences with DDR or are just about to embark on critical disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration of ex-combatants. Some of them are also here today: I welcome delegates from Cote d'Ivoire, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Sudan and Uganda. I hope/am confident that, for all those on the onset of undertaking DDR, this Conference will serve as an excellent learning and networking opportunity and will prove incredibly useful in their efforts to build peace and stability in their countries.

**Output:** The output of this Conference is really twofold:

First, based on the deliberations at the Conference a final report with policy guidelines will be prepared. This report will provide innovative thinking on how to enhance DDR programmes so as to foster stability on the African continent. It will be widely disseminated and publicized so that international DDR debates and reform processes including the Stockholm and UN

initiatives on DDR as well as the UN inter-governmental policy process can benefit from the perspectives of African DDR stakeholders.

Secondly, the Conference will lay the foundation for, spur and support efforts to build a network of African DDR practitioners and stakeholders.

**Delegates:** As you will observe, participants invited to the Conference include diverse African DDR stakeholders, both male and female, such as government officials (policy and technical), beneficiaries of programmes (ex-combatants and associated groups), members of the armed forces and different insurgent factions, representatives of parties to peace accords, receiving/host communities, representatives of special needs groups and civil society organisations.

Participants come from African countries with experience or interest in DDR, namely Angola, Burundi, Cote d'Ivoire, the DRC, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Liberia, Mozambique, (Nigeria), Rwanda, Sierra Leone, (South Africa), Sudan, Uganda and Zimbabwe among others.

Other invitees include donor countries, various UN agencies and departments of the UN Secretariat, African regional (and sub-regional) organizations, and civil society organisations.

I am confident that the Conference will enable African DDR practitioners to exchange lessons learned and share their diverse insights and experiences with the international community, to our mutual benefit.

Mr. President,

Distinguished Participants I wish to thank you once more for joining us in this important exercise. I am sure that we will jointly hold a successful Conference.

Thank You