

Statement by
Mr. J. Victor Angelo, Executive Representative
of the Secretary – General for Sierra Leone
at the second country – specific meeting of the
United Nations Peacebuilding Commission on Sierra Leone
13 December 2006

Mr. Chairman,

1. I am very pleased to see you presiding over this second country-specific meeting on Sierra Leone. May I also thank the Chairman of the Peacebuilding Commission, the Permanent Representative of Angola, for the excellent leadership of the work of the first country-specific meeting. I would like also to extend the gratitude of my UN colleagues to the members of the Commission for the continued support of the peace consolidation process in the country.

Mr. Chairman,

I. Recent developments

2. Since the 12 October Commission's meeting, further progress has been made in the peace consolidation process in Sierra Leone. Preparations for the crucial 2007 elections are well underway. On 23 November, Sierra Leone's political parties signed a code of conduct, committing themselves to peaceful, democratic standards and rules, as they approach the elections. On 30 November, Sierra Leone's Parliament approved a long-awaited constituency boundary delimitation report prepared by the National Electoral Commission. These important steps are expected to contribute to the conduct of credible elections in July 2007. In another significant development, the Government, in close collaboration with international partners, launched a review of the National Anti-Corruption Strategy. Further measures were recommended to enhance efforts aimed at combating corruption and promoting greater accountability. These would include the review of the Anti-Corruption Act of 2000, reinforcing the capacity and powers of the National Anti-Corruption Commission to investigate and prosecute cases, as well as greater emphasis on preventive

measures. Tangible progress on these recommendations is critical for the success of the Government's anti-corruption drive.

3. As highlighted in the Government's statement, the Consultative Group meeting, held from 29 to 30 November in Freetown, provided an important opportunity not only to assess progress in the implementation of the Poverty Reduction Strategy, but also to promote constructive and frank dialogue between the Government and its development partners on the way forward. While acknowledging the positive steps taken in the past year, the Consultative Group underscored that risks to the gains made so far still exist. In this regard, the partners stressed that renewed energies are needed in the various critical areas, particularly the reform of the civil service, public accountability, private sector development, youth employment, and building the capacity of key national institutions. Addressing these challenges requires concrete actions and stronger commitment both at the national and international levels.

4. The Government of Sierra Leone and the UN have initiated consultations to access the peacebuilding fund. To that end, a joint Task Force has been established to prepare a priority plan and specific project documents in the four peacebuilding priority areas, namely youth unemployment, capacity building, the reform of the judicial and security sectors and support for consolidation of democratic institutions. Consultations with development partners and civil society have also been conducted to set-up an in-country mechanism to ensure a participatory approach. It has been further agreed that all peacebuilding initiatives should be linked to the existing strategies and programmes, to ensure maximum impact, reduce transaction costs and avoid overlapping. We welcome the setting up by the Government of a working group on donor harmonization and aid policy, in line with the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness of 2 March 2005.

Mr. Chairman,

II. Existing activities/programmes and gaps in priority areas

Youth unemployment and empowerment

5. Youth unemployment and marginalization remain the most serious threat to Sierra Leone's stability. The Government has taken initial steps to address the issue, with the creation of a Ministry of Youth, formulation of a national youth policy and, recently, by launching a Youth Employment Scheme. A number of development partners, non-governmental organizations and the United Nations system are also engaged in some youth-related programmes, including in the agricultural sector. Many of these programmes are small scale and need to be expanded. That should be the main thrust of our strategic approach, meaning investing in successful existing activities, scaling them up and emphasizing management and literacy skills training. As we promote this line, we also recognize the need for a comprehensive approach based on sustainable economic growth led by the private sector.

Justice and security sector development

6. The Government, with the support of its international partners, has made significant progress over recent years in the security sector. In addition, efforts are underway to reform the justice sector, particularly through implementation of a Justice Sector Development Programme (JSDP), funded by the United Kingdom, in collaboration with other partners, including the United Nations. The justice and security sectors continue however to face serious capacity constraints. Lack of timely adjudication of disputes and large backlog of court cases, as well as poor prison conditions, are some of the key problems, which continue to negatively impact on the credibility of the justice system.

7. Transitional measures are needed to address the most pressing gaps facing the justice sector. These will include reinforcing alternative dispute resolution mechanisms, such as the traditional courts at the chiefdom level, deploying additional magistrates to reduce the backlog and dealing with the over-crowding of prisons. Strengthening the coordination capacities of key justice and security institutions, such as the Ministries of Justice and Internal Affairs, as well as the Office of National Security, is also critical.

8. The human rights situation continues to improve. The recent establishment of the National Human Rights Commission is a commendable development. In order to implement

its mandate, the Commission needs considerable financial and substantive support from both the Government and external partners.

Reinforcing Democracy

9. A number of important steps have been made towards reinforcing democracy, including the reconstitution of a democratically elected Parliament, the establishment of a National Electoral Commission (NEC) and a Political Parties Registration Commission (PPRC). As the country now prepares for the 2007 elections, the strengthening of these institutions, particularly NEC and PPRC, is an urgent priority. The successful conduct of the elections will greatly contribute to the consolidation of peace in Sierra Leone. In this regard, I should draw your attention to the \$7 million shortfall in the electoral funding, which needs to be resolved within the next month. If the gap is not bridged by the end of January 2007, this would seriously compromise the preparations and the calendar of operations, including the polling date.

10. We have not given enough attention to gender disparity. For instance, existing laws to combat gender based violence are not being fully enforced, and most national legislation are outdated and do not meet international standards. Furthermore, as mentioned in the third Report of the Secretary-General on UNIOSIL (S/2006/922), dated 28 November 2006, we need “to invest considerably in building women’s capacity to participate in the political process and to increase women’s participation in the upcoming elections”. Progress in this regard is an essential prerequisite for the success of the peace and development agenda.

Enhancing Public Service delivery

11. Despite the post – conflict strides made in the restoration and extension of critical public services and institutions, their capacity and performance remain grossly inadequate. The civil service is staffed with mostly unskilled, unmotivated and poorly remunerated personnel. 82 per cent of the senior civil servants are over the age of 50 and 42 per cent are over 55 years old. Only seven per cent of senior civil servants are women. The continued reform and building the capacity of the public service is critical for Sierra Leone to be able to

make sustained progress towards human security in the framework of the Millennium Development Goals.

Mr. Chairman,

12. Progress in the consolidation of peace and stability in Sierra Leone is closely linked to developments in the sub-region. This was underscored during the conference on peace and security held in Conakry on 16 November, with the participation of the countries of the Mano River Union (Guinea, Sierra Leone and Liberia), as well as Côte d'Ivoire. I would like to underline that the United Nations teams in the MRU and Côte d'Ivoire held their fourth regular meeting in Monrovia on 6 December. They agreed on further collaboration and joint programming in cross-border issues related to the smuggling of small arms, human trafficking, drug control, as well as youth unemployment and HIV and AIDS.

III. Existing strategies and national frameworks:

Mr. Chairman,

13. The priority areas for the PBC's engagement in Sierra Leone take into account the existing strategies on poverty reduction and peace consolidation. Gaps in each area have been identified and prioritized. The Poverty Reduction Strategy was approved in 2005 and is monitored through the Consultative Group process. The Peace Consolidation Strategy was developed to complement the poverty reduction programme and address specific threats to stability. It also aims at creating national capacities for conflict prevention. We are of the view that the process initiated by the Peacebuilding Commission should enable further sharpening of the Peace Consolidation Strategy, as well as tracking progress in its implementation. Furthermore, this is an opportunity to broaden donor support for the country's peacebuilding endeavours and to share its experience.

IV. Development of programming strategies and identifying partnerships:

14. The implementation of Sierra Leone's peace consolidation and development strategy has to be premised on strong partnerships and coordination among all actors. In that respect,

the United Nations Integrated Office (UNIOSIL), including the country team, continue to closely collaborate with the Government, development partners and all the relevant stakeholders. Having implemented its 2006 joint work plan, the UN system is now preparing a work plan for 2007, which will incorporate the key recommendations of the PBC. On the development side, work has now commenced on the United Nations Development Assistance Framework for 2008-2010.

15. One of the key post conflict tasks is the rebuilding of the national capacities for development management. This was highlight at the recent CG meeting. The question of absorptive capacities in the government remains a major concern. Consensus was reached that action must be taken to create such capacities in the short-term.

16. In concluding, consolidating peace, ensuring sustainable development and democratization in Sierra Leone require concerted actions on a limited number of priorities. As such, our discussion should remain focused and action-oriented, with clear outcomes and specific timetables.

Thank you.