



PERMANENT MISSION OF THE REPUBLIC OF
SIERRA LEONE TO THE UNITED NATIONS

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STATEMENT

by

**His Excellency Professor JOE R. PEMAGBI
Ambassador & Permanent Representative**

at the

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General Assembly**

on

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**United Nations Headquarters
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**Mr. President,
Distinguished delegates,**

The Sierra Leone delegation would like to join others in congratulating you on your election to preside over the work of this session of the General Assembly. We also take this opportunity to commend your predecessor for her contribution to the work of the Assembly, in particular for her initiatives in the on-going process of the United Nations reform.

Allow me to convey to you, the Secretary-General and this august Assembly greetings from the newly-elected President of Sierra Leone, His Excellency Ernest Bai Koroma, who took the oath of office just two weeks ago. President Koroma was not able to come for this debate because of time constraint.

Mr. President,

Sierra Leone would like to reaffirm its commitment to the United Nations as the only international body that has the capacity to combat the multiferous problems of the World. The salvation of the world from conflict, natural disasters, diseases, hunger, poverty, oppression, abuse and violation of rights, the menacing climate change and achievement of our development goals will remain distant dreams without multilateral action. And the stronger our United Nations the greater our chances to realise the objectives for which we set it up. That is why Sierra Leone will never relent in her support for the reform process of the UN to enable it to respond appropriately to its numerous and diverse and ever increasing challenges.

Mr. President,

The reform exercise has scored some major successes, but the most critical and contentious reform – that of the Security Council - remains elusive. As long as the status quo is maintained, Africa will remain disadvantaged as the only continent without a voice of permanent representation on the Council. We therefore urge for a speedy consideration of the expansion of, and equitable representation in the Council, to make it more representative, more democratic and more accountable and therefore more effective.

A new dawn has broken in the political landscape of Sierra Leone. Once again Sierra Leone has demonstrated an exemplary performance in the area of consolidation of democracy and governance. We would like to acknowledge with humility the messages of commendation we received from various parts of the world for the conduct of the recent Parliamentary and Presidential elections. As one influential Western media organization put it, "Sierra Leone is a pearl in the political crown of African politics".

My delegation welcomes the statement issued by Members of the UN Security Council in which they congratulated the people and institutions of Sierra Leone, in particular the

National Electoral Commission and the Sierra Leone Police, on their conduct in the election period, and the commitment that they demonstrated to the democratic process.

President Koroma has asked me to convey, on behalf of all Sierra Leoneans, sincere thanks to members of the international community for their invaluable contribution to the electoral process. We are grateful in particular for the logistical support that the various institutions concerned with the election received to enable them to perform their respective functions.

As President Koroma said after taking the oath of office, the people of Sierra Leone must congratulate themselves for this historic resolve to ensure the victory of democracy and the free exercise of the will of the people.

Mr. President,

No one can deny that after a brutal rebel war Sierra Leone has enjoyed five years of relative peace. However, peace is not an event. It transcends the signing of ceasefire and peace agreements. It also transcends the successful disarmament and demobilization of ex-combatants, as well as the official declaration of the end of armed conflict.

Peace is a process, a process that must be consolidated, maintained and sustained. Indeed, this is why the United Nations was established after two world wars, to promote social progress and better standards of life for the peoples of the world; to unite our strength to maintain international peace and security. The establishment of the new United Nations Peace Building Commission to facilitate post-conflict recovery is consistent with the objectives of the Organization. It adds to the true meaning and scope of the concept of peace.

The Sierra Leone government considers the recent elections as part of the peace process. The people have once again exercised their constitutional right to choose the men and women they would like to serve the nation. Now, Mr. President, we must not forget that the people also have a right to economic and social development. The right to vote is inextricably linked to the right to food, the right to clean and portable water, the right to basic social services and of course the right to development.

All the praise, all the commendation that Sierra Leoneans have received in connection with the exercise of their political right, the right to vote, will be meaningless unless we create and intensify our collective effort to ensure that they see and enjoy the dividends of that process. Periodic elections are important, but they are not a panacea for all their needs. Now that the elections are over, the government is determined to meet the challenge of translating the exercise of a political right into the realization of the economic and social rights of all Sierra Leoneans. There is indeed a change of regime but that change needs urgent and substantial support to produce its desired dividends for the citizens. Accordingly, I would like to solicit the support of the United Nations and the entire international community and our bilateral partners to help us to deliver the expectations of this change.

Mr. President,

Sierra Leone will continue to have high expectations from the United Nations, including its Peacebuilding Commission (PBC) and Peacebuilding Fund (PBF). Sierra Leone was selected as one of the first two countries on the Commission's agenda, and thus became eligible for funding which has already had a positive impact on our ability to consolidate the peace. We thank the PBC and the PBF for this timely consideration. We note with appreciation, for instance, the timely support that the Sierra Leone Police received from the Peacebuilding Fund in enhancing the capacity of that institution to manage public order during the recent elections.

The four priority areas that have been identified by the government in consultation with the PBC, the UN system in Sierra Leone, and other stakeholders including civil society, are still valid. They are all equally important. However, in view of the inherent urgency and the critical nature of the youth problem, the government will make sure, as far as possible, that youth employment and empowerment continue to be accorded priority on the list of priorities.

We hope that details of the integrated Peacebuilding strategy or Framework for Cooperation with Sierra Leone will soon be finalized. While recognizing the importance of partnership and accountability, we strongly believe that national ownership must be the core principle of the framework.

Mr. President,

While Sierra Leoneans are being showered, deservedly so, with commendation for the outcome of the elections, and while today the nation is being held in high esteem in the area of political and constitutional order, we must not forget that the country still finds itself in that uncomfortable position in the UNDP human development index as one of the least developed countries in the world today. Unfortunately for Sierra Leone and the rest of the developing world, the prospects for achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) by the year 2015 remain cloudy and distant. My delegation shares the view that practical steps must be taken as a matter of urgency to accelerate the process of meeting the goals. We therefore welcome the recent launching of the Millennium Development Goals Africa Steering Group chaired by Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, to mobilize the heads of the United Nations system and major multilateral and inter-governmental organizations in support of African States in their effort to meet the MDGs. In principle, we support all initiatives that could at least get Africa on track. These include the Millennium Development Goals Call to Action which was launched by Prime Minister Gordon Brown last July, and the Declaration signed by a number of Heads of State and Government and private sector leaders. We, for our part, acknowledge our responsibility for meeting the goals. However, we strongly believe that the developed countries should fulfill their commitments as partners in an interdependent world, with special support preference for countries emerging from conflict, to accelerate their movement towards meeting the goals.

Mr. President,

Sierra Leone will continue to foster and maintain friendly relations with all States Members of the United Nations, in particular those in our immediate neighbourhood, members of the Mano River Union and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS). This is why less than a week after assuming office, President Koroma paid a visit to the two other founding members of the Mano River Union, Liberia and Guinea, and to Burkina Faso, the current Chair of ECOWAS.

Mr. President,

For far too long, the situation in some of our countries has been a threat to regional and international peace and security. Sierra Leone would like to assure this Assembly that it stands ready to reverse this trend in the sub-region of West Africa – to help reduce tension, prevent armed conflict, and strengthen institutions and machinery that have been created primarily to promote the economic and social well-being of people.

We will continue to work assiduously with the UN, AU, ECOWAS, the EU and individual sovereign states to pursue the goals of peace and security enshrined in the UN Charter, for Africa and the rest of the world.

Thank you, Mr. President.
