

# **STATEMENT**

*by*

**HIS EXCELLENCY DR. ERNEST BAI KOROMA  
PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF SIERRA LEONE**

*at the*

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GENERAL ASSEMBLY  
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**Mr. President,  
Distinguished Delegates,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

It is an honour for me, as President of the Republic of Sierra Leone, to deliver my first speech to this distinguished Assembly.

I wish to congratulate you, Mr. President, on your assumption of the high office of President of the Sixty-Third Session of the General Assembly of the United Nations, and to assure you of Sierra Leone's support and cooperation as you undertake the challenging responsibility of presiding over our deliberations during this session.

I should also like to express my gratitude to your predecessor for the efficient way in which he guided the last session.

**Mr. President,**

The sacred duty of this Organization "to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war" was tested in fire in Sierra Leone. But today Sierra Leone demonstrates what the United Nations can achieve when its Member States work closely together. The people of Sierra Leone know the value and relevance of the United Nations, and appreciate its continuing support as we reconstruct our society from war to peace, and work with determination to build a better future.

The theme for this session, "*Impact of the Global Food Crisis and Poverty and Hunger in the World and the Need to Democratize the United Nations*", is important and timely. Africa has a disproportionate share of the world's poor and hungry and the need for urgent and concerted action is compelling. The rising cost of food has had a negative impact on our resources, and is a risk to our national stability and the stability of other countries in West Africa. It is vital that Africa increases food productivity and achieves food self-sufficiency. African farmers need to adopt higher-yielding land

practices, with increased use of improved seeds, fertilizers and irrigation.

In this connection we welcome the work of the Alliance for a Green Revolution in Africa (AGRA), chaired by the former Secretary-General of the United Nations Mr. Kofi Annan. The Alliance recognizes that massive investment in Agriculture is key to a long-term solution to the continent's food crisis. This will enable Africans to grow enough of their own food and become less dependent on handouts from donor countries. Sierra Leone, like many other countries in Africa, is suitably positioned to benefit from such investment because of its vast arable land, abundant water resources and the fact that over 70% of its population is engaged in farming or farming related activities.

If this problem is going to be resolved, it is also essential to end the agricultural subsidies and trade barriers that impoverish African farmers.

**Mr. President,**

I have had the privilege to coordinate the African Union Committee of Ten Heads of State and Government charged with the mandate to promote the Common African Position on United Nations reform. In that capacity, and as Sierra Leone's Head of State, I welcome the theme, "*The Need to Democratize the United Nations*" as part of this year's work of the General Assembly.

The need to democratize and reform the Organization is of vital importance. However, reform is not an end in itself but a means to an end. We support a strong and effective United Nations that can meet the ever-increasing and complex array of challenges in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. We are convinced that a more representative and effective United Nations will strengthen the loyalty and commitment of Member States, and make the Organization more responsive to the needs of our time.

It should be recognized that the reform effort has achieved some modest successes. However, one of the most critical and urgent issues on our current reform agenda - reform of the Security Council - remains unresolved. We need to make the Security Council more representative of today's realities. The current composition of the Security Council contradicts basic principles of democratic representation. Africa has outlined its collective position in the Ezulwini Consensus. Africa will negotiate in good faith and we expect others to do the same in the best interest of the organization. The status quo is not an option. Africa, with fifty-three countries constituting about a quarter of the United Nations membership deserves permanent representation in the Security Council. We believe that the Security Council should be enlarged sooner rather than later.

**Mr. President,**

The United Nations has been an important force for global peace, development, and justice. Sierra Leone's peace and stability are due largely to United Nations peace keeping, a visible and an important aspect of the Organization's work.

The Peace Building Commission, the Peacebuilding Fund, and other United Nations agencies are helping us in critical ways to achieve our development priorities and to meet the challenges of post-conflict reconstruction.

The UN-backed Special Court for Sierra Leone, and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, have made extraordinary contributions in establishing the rule of law, and fighting against impunity so that the people of Sierra Leone can put their tragic past behind and look forward to the future. Without reconciliation, tolerance and the rule of law there can be no true and lasting peace.

The Special Court has established legal principles that will endure beyond its anticipated closure in 2010. I want to commend the efforts of the Special Court to engage both my Government and the international justice community to make preparations for any residual issues that might remain following its closure. The facilities of the Special Court in the

heart of our historic capital Freetown will be inherited by Sierra Leone, and we will explore the best possible use for them.

**Mr. President,**

In recent years, Sierra Leone has made real progress in consolidating democracy and good governance by conducting successive free, fair and non-violent Presidential, Parliamentary and Local Government elections. We are on the right path.

On behalf of all Sierra Leoneans, I would like to thank members of the international community for their invaluable contribution to our electoral process, particularly for the logistical and technical support to the various institutions that enabled them to perform their respective tasks.

But we are the first to acknowledge that much more needs to be done to achieve sustainable peace and development. War and deadly conflicts have social and economic consequences long after the fighting has ended. A peaceful country requires more than the absence of war.

Development remains the foremost need of Sierra Leoneans. Moreover, it is the foundation of security and it makes political rights meaningful. You can only be secure if you have food, shelter, clean water, and protection from disease. That is why the monumental task of poverty eradication is one of the national priorities of my Government. My Government is completing a second generation Poverty Reduction Strategy to guide us in the process. We have also developed a comprehensive strategy for the nation's development in the next five years called the "Agenda for Change". The Millennium Development Goals are also central to our work. Despite the enormous difficulties on the development front, and in achieving the MDGS, we are resolved to improve the lives of our people and to respond constructively to their needs and aspirations.

But international support remains crucial, if we are to consolidate hard-won gains. It is our hope that the United Nations and our development partners will continue to be our steadfast allies in our ongoing struggle for economic progress and development.

**Mr. President,**

The mission of the United Nations is more important than ever: to serve the cause of peace, to advance development, and to protect the human rights of all. The United Nations is a unique Forum where the weak and the strong, the poor and the prosperous can have their voices heard.

Sierra Leone reaffirms its commitment to the ideals and principles of the United Nations, and will continue to be a constructive member of the Organization.

I thank you Mr. President.

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