



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

STATEMENT

by

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Ambassador and Permanent Representative**

**To the Sixth Committee of the
United Nations General Assembly**

**“Criminal Accountability of United Nations
Officials and Experts on Mission”**

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**Mr. Chair,
Excellencies,
Distinguished Delegates,**

The delegation of Sierra Leone respectively associates this statement with the statements delivered by the distinguished representatives of Cameroon on behalf of the African Group, and the Islamic Republic of Iran on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement, and we offer this further elaboration in our national capacity.

My delegation takes note of the reports of the Secretary-General A/75/217 and A/75/228. We are pleased to note the announcement of the award of the Nobel Peace Prize for 2020 to the World Food Programme (WFP) by the Norwegian Nobel Committee for the Programme's efforts in combating hunger and contribution to peace, thereby conspicuously recognizing the "need for international solidarity and multilateral cooperation" at this time. In congratulating the WFP, which collaborates with the Government of Sierra Leone on the implementation of the "Free Quality Education" integrated school feeding programme, my delegation notes that the award is testamentary of the commitment of UN personnel, in particular UN officials or experts on mission, to the purpose of the UN as contained in its Charter. We hereby acknowledge that the great majority of UN officials and experts on mission perform their duties with admiration and integrity, often in challenging circumstances, upholding the high standards expected of UN personnel.

We, however, also acknowledge the existence of criminal behaviour, for which, accountability is critical for global confidence in our Organization. Without doubt, UN officials and experts on mission should be held accountable for the crimes they commit, and this requires action on credible allegations that reveal that a crime may have been committed by UN officials or experts on mission by States with jurisdiction on the one hand, and on the other hand by action through the UN system, including its agencies, funds and programmes.

Mr. Chair,

On our part, Sierra Leone being a Troop and Police Contributing Country to UN peacekeeping operations, is incrementally building the legal and policy frameworks to strengthen criminal accountability. For instance, sexual and gender based violence (SGBV) and any act of sexual exploitation or abuse (SEA) by members of the Republic of Sierra Leone Armed Forces (RSLAF) constitutes an act of serious misconduct and thereby prohibited by both military law and the general law. The RSLAF also has a policy of zero tolerance on SGBV, including SEA and is being fully implemented.

All peacekeeping personnel are obligated to act with the highest standards of integrity and conduct both in the performance of their official duties and in their private lives, and must be sensitive to local customs, traditions and cultures, and demonstrate respect for the local population, particularly women and children in their areas of operation. Upholding these high standards requires the necessary capacity and sensitivity training of personnel, which have formed a key component of the training regimen of Sierra Leonean peacekeepers. Training manuals on SGBV have been developed, and training programs rolled out accordingly. These trainings provide not only foundational knowledge and skills, but also support gender mainstreaming, in preventing SGBV, exploitation and abuse even in peace support and peacekeeping operations. All of these have manifested into exemplary conduct and discipline of our military and police personnel on both the African Union peace support operations and UN peacekeeping operations.

Mr. Chair,

Sierra Leone believes that State of nationality should have precedence over the host country on the issue of criminal accountability of UN officials and experts on mission. We, therefore, appreciate the Organization's efforts to refer credible allegations of criminal conduct to the State of nationality and encourages all States to comply with the relevant UN resolutions.

Sierra Leone echoes the "no compromise" and comprehensive approach to criminal accountability, amplifying the call for zero tolerance against impunity. We fully support the "zero-tolerance policy" on sexual exploitation and abuse throughout the UN system. We underline the importance of strengthening this policy of zero tolerance through effective dissemination and robust implementation in order to address all cases of sexual exploitation and abuse committed by UN officials or experts on mission, most especially peacekeeping personnel.

The delegation of Sierra Leone looks forward to the Sixth Committee's further deliberations on the next meeting of the *Ad Hoc* Committee in the framework of a working group and we agree that the focus should be on the substantive legal matters emanating from the Group of Legal Experts report.

In closing, let me affirm the view that Member States are morally compelled not to allow privileges and immunities granted to UN personnel to be used as a shield to commit criminal acts with impunity.

I thank you.

