



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

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STATEMENT

BY

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AT THE 78TH SESSION OF THE UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY

**ON AGENDA ITEM 76:
CRIMINAL ACCOUNTABILITY OF UNITED NATIONS OFFICIALS
AND EXPERTS ON MISSION**

NEW YORK, 10TH OCTOBER 2023

CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

Chair,
Excellencies,
Distinguished Delegates,

1. The delegation of Sierra Leone respectfully aligns this statement with the statements delivered by the Distinguished Representatives of the **Republic of Uganda** on behalf of the African Group, and the **Islamic Republic of Iran** on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement.
2. My delegation thanks the Secretary-General for his reports **A/78/275** and **A/78/248**. We take note of the contents thereof.
3. Sierra Leone reiterates its acknowledgment that a great majority of UN officials and experts on mission perform their duties with admiration, courage, and integrity; often in challenging circumstances, upholding the high standards expected of UN personnel. We, however, also note the existence of regrettable criminal conduct and behaviour, for which, accountability is critical for global confidence and trust in our Organization.

4. We strongly believe that peacekeeping personnel or experts on missions are obligated to act with the highest standards of integrity, both in the performance of their official duties and, as appropriate, in their private lives. There must be sensitivity 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 and experts on mission.
5. Given the continuation of peacekeeping missions in areas of conflicts, we fully support efforts to ensure peacekeeping personnel and experts on mission conduct themselves in the utmost professional manner, with cultural and social sensitivities. My delegation therefore commends the Member States and international organizations who have contributed to these efforts.

Chair,

6. On the significant issue of eradicating **sexual exploitation and abuse**, Sierra Leone echoes the “no

compromise” and the comprehensive approach to criminal accountability. We amplify the call for zero tolerance, fully supporting the “zero tolerance policy” on sexual exploitation and abuse throughout the UN system in order to put an end to impunity.

7. We take note that 11 cases were reported to States of nationality by the Office of Legal Affairs, and 3 of them were based on sexual violence. While this is a great improvement from previous reports, we continue to advocate for the complete eradication of SGBV or any form or manifestation that will lead to zero reporting.
8. Sierra Leone continues to underline the importance of strengthening the policy of zero tolerance through effective dissemination and robust implementation to address all cases of sexual exploitation and abuse committed by UN officials or experts on mission, most especially peacekeeping personnel.
9. My delegate welcomes the sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) investigations course for police deploying to United Nations and African Union peacekeeping missions conducted by the United Kingdom including in Sierra Leone. The course, which was focused on trauma-informed, victim-centred

investigation, and delivering specialist knowledge and skills for dealing with complex and traumatic investigations, will enable police officers to support the most vulnerable victims and bring more perpetrators to justice.

10. We are pleased to note that such a training is being rolled out across our neighboring countries, and we look forward to its full application as we call for more member States, with the capability to do so, to extend such much needed capacity support to particularly Troop Contributing Countries.

11. At the national level, we continue to strengthen and advance legislative and policy documents as standalone and supplemented initiatives to end SGBV and bring perpetrators to justice. In further focusing on ensuring accountability for SGBV and, in particular SEA, we continue to closely monitor the implementation of UN General Assembly resolution **A/76/304** - "International Cooperation on access to Justice, Remedies and assistance to Survivors of Sexual Violence" to ensure we advance its main objective and provide access to justice for SGBV survivors.

Chair,

12. Sierra Leone wishes to further highlight the reported number of fraud and corruption cases with grave concern. As this is a significant integrity issue, which would lead to a trust deficit, continual active engagement with the ad hoc committee to develop sustainable strategies to combat the scourge of corruption is urged.
13. Finally, and on the exercise of jurisdiction, Sierra Leone wishes to reiterate its belief 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 urges all States to comply with the relevant UN resolutions.
14. In closing, **Chair**, let me affirm the view that ultimately 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.
15. I thank you.