



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

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STATEMENT

BY

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CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

Mr. President,

I would like to join others in congratulating you on your election to direct the affairs of the 59th session of this great parliament of nations. Let me also take this opportunity to pay tribute to your predecessor, His Excellency Mr. Julian Hunte, especially for the momentum he gave to the on-going process of the revitalization of the General Assembly.

Mr. President,

Once again, in his annual report on the work of the Organization and in his forthright statement to this Assembly last week, the Secretary-General set the tone of this annual general debate. In commending him for his tenacity and courage under extreme political circumstances, my delegation shares his overall assessment of the current international situation and the role of the United Nations.

Just over three weeks ago, on the initiative of the Member States of the Non-Aligned Movement, this Assembly reaffirmed the central role of the United Nations in the maintenance of international peace and security and the promotion of international cooperation. It was indeed a reaffirmation that this Organization was founded on international cooperation, and that its efficacy is rooted in international cooperation. This delegation therefore urges all Member States to adhere to this principle of cooperation.

Sierra Leone believes, and will continue to believe in the United Nations. After all, we are part of the United Nations, like each and every State represented in this Assembly. Of course, there are some difficulties, but we strongly believe that given adequate resources and cooperative support in a timely manner, and given the necessary moral and political support, the United Nations can deliver, as it has done admirably in Sierra Leone.

In this connection, allow me, Mr. President, to express our sincere appreciation to all the countries that have contributed troops, police and civilian personnel and other forms of support to the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone. Our thanks are also due to the staff of all the agencies and programmes of the United Nations family, and the non-governmental organizations that have worked in partnership with the United Nations, the Government and civil society to restore peace and stability in our country.

Mr. President,

A theme that has reverberated within this chamber in the past week and in other international fora is the observance of the rule of law. The Secretary-General's analysis of its significance needs no embellishment. The causes and character of the conflict in Sierra Leone tell us, perhaps more than any other country in the world in recent times, that nearly everything crumbles when the rule of law collapses, and therefore, it should be made the pillar of post-conflict reconstruction and national recovery, governance, administration of justice and the cornerstone of lasting peace.

While the Government of Sierra Leone is struggling, albeit with limited resources to reform its own administration of justice system, it is also concerned about the financial situation of the Special Court, established in the country to address impunity. The efficacy, indeed the credibility of the Court, could be questioned unless urgent measures are taken to address its budgetary problems.

I should therefore like to take this opportunity to appeal for continued voluntary contributions as well as the requested subventions from the regular budget of the United Nations for the Special Court. As President Kabbah said at the formal opening of the court house last March, it is "...a Special Court for Sierra Leone, a symbol of the rule of law and an essential element in the pursuit of peace, justice and reconciliation for the people of Sierra Leone. It is also a Special Court for the international community, a symbol of the rule of international law."

There is no guarantee that the victims of violations of international humanitarian and human rights law during the civil war in Sierra Leone would receive reparation for those heinous crimes. So the least we can do for them now is to ensure that justice is done. We can do so by reducing the financial burden of the Special Court, and b demonstrating that we are indeed serious about respect for the rule of law.

Mr. President,

The United Nations was formed over fifty years ago, as a response to the peace and security needs of the era of its birth. Since then, the world has experienced, and continues to experience fundamental changes to which the United Nations should adapt. That is why Sierra Leone continues to follow with profound interest the consultative processes for the revitalization of the General Assembly and reforms in the Security Council, to reflect the reality

of the contemporary world. My delegation wishes to urge you to sustain the momentum in the processes, generated by the Fifty-Eight Session of this Assembly.

Mr. President,

The menace of terrorism and local conflicts continues to impede peace, stability and development in many parts of the world. Innocent victims apart, conflicts have reversed the development gains of poor countries and even reduced them to the status of donor-dependants.

While deploring all acts of terrorism, it is important to recognize that poor countries, particularly those emerging from conflict, have weak capacity to fight terrorism. If global action is what is needed to fight terrorism, and my delegation believes this should be the case, efforts should be made to enhance the capacity of poor countries to play their own role in the battle.

Mr. President,

After about eleven years of a violent and constructive civil conflict, Sierra Leone is now in the delicate post-conflict phase. It is in this phase that the root causes of the conflict should be addressed and the foundation for permanent peace, stability and sustainable development should be laid. In short, this is the phase in which the gains of the peace effort should be maximized, using a synergic approach that incorporates development and other strands of generators of peace into peacekeeping.

But this approach needs resources and planning beyond the traditional peacekeeping strategies that involves pulling out when the guns fall silent. It is in this regard that my delegation is soliciting continued and more support for post-conflict Sierra Leone. An important component of this appeal is that development and financial institutions should understand the multi-faceted demands and delicate character of post-conflict situations and treat them as special cases. This means that these institutions should revisit their rigid and standard prescriptions with the purpose of making them flexible and responsive to the special requirements of post-conflict situations.

Mr. President,

Ten days ago, the Security Council extended UNAMSIL's mandate to June 2005. The Government of Sierra Leone has endorsed the Secretary-General's assessment and recommendations regarding the benchmarks for the residual presence of UNAMSIL in the country. We note in particular that over the next several months, the Security Council will review the residual functions against the capacity of the Sierra Leone armed forces and police to maintain security and stability effectively throughout the country. We hope that the review will take into consideration the security situation in the sub-region.

I would like to reassure the international community through this august Assembly that we do not expect UNAMSIL to remain in Sierra Leone indefinitely. The Government of Sierra Leone is determined to ensure a smooth and seamless transition from UNAMSIL to the Republic of Sierra Leone Armed Forces (RSLAF) and Police throughout the country. The restructured army and the police have already demonstrated through training, discipline and performance, that they are about to be ready to assume full responsibility for the security and safety of the people of Sierra Leone. But training is only a part of the total picture of readiness. For effective operational readiness, both the army and the police need logistic support and equipment. Accordingly, my delegation wishes to appeal to friendly nations for assistance to equip our security forces to enable them function effectively.

Meanwhile, for obvious reasons, the Government and people of Sierra Leone are encouraged by the prospects for consolidating the deployment of the United Nations peacekeeping mission throughout neighbouring Liberia. Also, recent dialogues between and among the leaders of the Mano River Union augur well for peace and stability in our sub-region. We need the continued support of the international community in resuscitating the objectives and programmes of the Mano River Union, because fully functional, it can complement the effort of ECOWAS and the United Nations in the sub-region. In this connection, I would like to register our appreciation to the Secretary-General for his encouragement of the rejuvenation process of the Union.

Mr. President,

The United Nations has already identified many of the root causes of armed conflict within States, including Sierra Leone. With the assistance of the international community, efforts are being made to address those root causes. The objective is to prevent the recurrence of armed conflicts. My delegation believes that equal attention should also be paid to the root causes of armed conflict across states, including the senseless acts of international terrorism that are being perpetrated in many parts of the world. While prompt, effective and decisive measures are absolutely necessary to deal with the phenomenon, it is about time we try to identify and address the root causes of such ignoble acts.

Mr. President, new challenges are emerging and new threats are being hatched in various corners of our world with unprecedented frequency. However, we must not forget the old and existing challenges, the old and unresolved threats to human safety and security. Without prejudging the outcome of the Secretary-General's High-level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change, Sierra Leone hopes that the Panel's report would help throw some light on the probable link between what could be described as old or existing threats and those now being characterized as new threats and challenges. Perhaps, as President Kabbah suggested at the Millennium Summit, four years ago, the old and existing challenges are taking new forms and assuming new dimensions. What we are experiencing is perhaps a transmutation of threats and challenges.

And speaking of old challenges and threats Mr. President, the question of Palestine comes to mind. It has been on our agenda for far too long. We know that it is a complex issue. However, the longer it remains unresolved, the greater the risk of unending cycles of violence. Sierra Leone firmly believes that an equitable solution, in particular the establishment of an independent Palestinian State side by side with Israel, would be a giant step forward towards peace and security not only in the Middle East but also in the rest of our troubled and unsafe world.

Still in the area of existing threats to international peace and security, my delegation is disturbed by the tragic humanitarian situation in the Darfur region of Sudan. We applaud the response of the African Union to the crisis and urge all stakeholders to do whatever is necessary to speedily resolve the conflict. But let me emphasize that the African Union would like to do more if it has the resources. Accordingly, I would like to make an open appeal

for financial and material support for the African Union to enable it to deal with the situation.

Mr. President,

The Government of Sierra Leone and people know from experience that ceasefire, disarmament, demobilization and reintegration are essential components of peace. But we are still faced with the daunting task of consolidating the peace because peace goes far beyond the DDR processes of ex-combatants. The consolidation of peace, real peace, means improvement in the lives and livelihood of all our people. It means jobs, food, education, health care, adequate housing and other social services. As the Secretary-General observes in his latest report on the UN mission, considerable progress has been made towards economic and social recovery. However, in order to sustain the process of consolidating peace and to facilitate the smooth transition from recovery to sustainable development, Sierra Leone needs continued support particularly for vulnerable areas of the country.

Mr. President,

We look forward to the 2005 comprehensive review of the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals, a review that will coincide with the sixtieth anniversary of the United Nations. We in Sierra Leone will also be reviewing the state of our food security goal of ensuring that by the end of 2007, no Sierra Leonean should go to bed hungry. Our food security goal must be seen in the context of one of the United Nations Millennium Development Goals, namely the reduction of extreme poverty and hunger. Given the grave consequences of extreme poverty and starvation, these are realistic goals. They represent the minimum standard necessary to save lives. They are attainable.

Mr. President,

We know that it is our responsibility to do more for ourselves. At the same time we also know the urgency of addressing the “democratic deficit” in international economic and financial decision-making. In our interdependent and increasingly globalizing world, economic and social inequities within countries are a reflection of unfair rules, unfair trade practices, and uneven playing fields in international transactions. ILO Director-General, Juan Somavia, was correct when he told the recent

African Union summit in Ouagadougou “good national governance will not succeed unless we have good global governance”. Consumers need to share, in a more equitable manner with producers in the developing world, the benefits derived from their abundant natural and human resources. This means, among other things, fair prices and debt relief, all of which should have a positive impact on our capacity to reduce poverty within our respective developing countries.

Thank you, Mr. President.