



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

245 East 49th Street • New York, NY 10017

*Statement*

*by*

**Hon. Alhaji Momodu Koroma**  
**Minister of Foreign Affairs & International Cooperation**

*at the*

**General Debate of the Sixtieth Session**  
**of the United Nations General Assembly**

***New York, 23<sup>rd</sup> September 2005***

**Check Against Delivery**

Mr. President,

The delegation of the Republic of Sierra Leone wishes to express its profound appreciation of the significant contribution of the President of the Fifty-Ninth Session to the work of the General Assembly, and to congratulate you on your assumption of the leadership of the Sixtieth Session of this august body. You and your predecessor will always have a special place in the history of the United Nations as Presidents of the General Assembly at the height of the organization's reform process.

The United Nations was founded on the principle of multilateral cooperation for the maintenance of international peace and security. For sixty years, it has been the focus of its members - rich and poor, big and small - for pursuing this critical responsibility. Today, for many of its members, it is the great hope for not only peace and security, but also for the attainment of every area of human aspiration, particularly development, human rights, freedom and democracy.

The United Nations was designed to serve the world of the aftermath of the Second World War, a world in many ways different from today's world. That is why my delegation has welcomed with total commitment reforms in the UN system to reflect the realities of today's world, and we will continue to participate fully in the reform process.

We welcome the outcome document of last week's Summit and applaud the negotiations that lead to its adoption by consensus. The success of these negotiations indicate that in spite of our differences and individual sovereign interests, Member States recognize that we have more in common than divide us, and that for a better world, the common interests enjoy precedence over individual interests.

The rhetoric that has accompanied the outcome document has been impressive and reassuring, especially for developing countries and countries in conflict and emerging from conflict. If these soothing statements are matched by action, this year's UN Summit and General Assembly will have a landmark effect on the UN and the world. We are optimistic it will.

Mr. President,

This is the last UN General Assembly before the completion of the withdrawal of the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone at the end of December, 2005. UNAMSIL has achieved successes that are unique in the history of UN peace keeping efforts. Sierra Leoneans will forever remember the positive difference the Mission made in their crisis and their lives. For this, we can never thank the UN and the entire international community enough for coming to our rescue and for standing by us when we could not stand alone. In particular, we are profoundly grateful to countries that contributed troops to UNAMSIL and countries that financially supported the Mission.

With tremendous feeling of relief, we welcome the proposal to constitute an Integrated UN Mission to succeed UNAMSIL with the objective of supporting Sierra Leone to continue to address critical areas of concern including the causes of the conflict, consolidating the peace, human rights, development, legal and judicial and governance reforms, the rule of law and the security entities. This measure has allayed the fears of Sierra Leoneans that UNAMSIL's departure would create a security vacuum and mark the end of programmes associated with the Mission. We

look forward with eager expectations to yet another success in UN peace keeping experiment in Sierra Leone.

The creation of the Peace Building Commission will be in consonance with the views expressed by my President five years ago when, from this rostrum at the Millennium Summit, he spoke about the imperative of adaptation by the United Nations. He pleaded with the United Nations to continue to adapt and equip itself to deal with the perennial problems and new manifestations of human insecurity and underdevelopment. He also spoke about some of the ways in which Sierra Leone had tested the capacity of the United Nations to adapt itself to respond to local and global challenges.

Today, the Organization is preparing to transform its peacekeeping functions in Sierra Leone to meet some of the post-conflict needs of the country. This is a landmark decision that could serve as a model for effective coordination of strategies and programmes between the United Nations, its agencies and programmes and organizations and development partners in countries emerging from conflict.

We note with interest that the architecture and plans for the operation of the new integrated office were based on close and extensive cooperation between relevant departments of the United Nations Secretariat and various UN agencies and organizations comprising the Country Team. Sierra Leone hopes that this process of consultation and cooperation will continue. We urge the new UN Mission to work closely with existing national institutions and other initiatives that we have set up over the last five years to tackle post-conflict problems. We have no doubt that the new office will provide a guinea pig for the work of the proposed UN Peace Building Commission, to which we will spare no effort to lend support.

Mr. President,

As you are aware, it is not enough to establish these short-term though essential post-conflict bridges. What we need desperately is the mobilization of resources including those required for capacity building for sustainable economic and social development. The objective is not merely one of ensuring that Sierra Leone and other countries emerging from conflict do not slide back into conflict. Rather, the ultimate objective must be to ensure that Sierra Leoneans do not remain in abject poverty.

The three main elements – development, peace and security, and human rights -- highlighted in the Secretary-General's report entitled "In Larger Freedom", and in the Outcome Document of last week's High-level Meeting, are all interrelated. However, as the document states, development is a central goal by itself. That its why no one should be surprised by the importance that Sierra Leone, a poor country emerging from a devastating conflict, attaches to the development cluster of the Outcome Document, including the section on ways of meeting the special needs of Africa.

The people of Sierra Leone continue to attach importance to the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and the commitments our Heads of State and Government made in this Assembly five years ago. The principal purpose of the just concluded High-Level Meeting was to renew our determination to fulfill those commitments.

The General Assembly would be interested to know that the food security objective of ensuring that no Sierra Leonean goes to bed hungry by the year 2007 is consistent with and directly linked to the MDGs. So are the objectives embodied in

our Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP). We are determined to continue to work with our development partners to achieve those objectives.

Mr. President,

For the overwhelming majority of us, 'freedom from want' means the collective responsibility, national and international, to eradicate extreme poverty, the collective responsibility to ensure that people in all regions of the world enjoy, first and foremost, their human right to food, basic health care, education, clean water and other amenities that sustain life. As we see it, 'freedom from fear' means the collective responsibility of all States to remove and eliminate the instruments that threaten the safety and security of people every where, such as the illicit traffic and use of small arms, and the accumulation of nuclear and other weapons of mass destruction. 'Freedom from want' and 'freedom from fear' also imply the responsibility to accept without reservation the relationship between disarmament and development.

Furthermore, 'freedom to live in dignity' implies the collective responsibility of all States, to ensure that their peoples are treated as human beings. This includes the protection of all the rights enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights – economic, social, cultural, political and civil rights. That responsibility, in our view implies cooperation and assistance where necessary to enhance the capacity for both prevention and protection. In this connection, Sierra Leone is grateful for the assistance it continues to receive from the United Nations in the field of human rights.

Mr. President,

Sierra Leone has continued to make giant strides in all areas of human endeavour since the armed conflict ended in 2002. Since then, Presidential and parliamentary and local government elections, the latter ushering in a revival of local government which had been dormant for nearly thirty years, have been held in conformity with democratic principle and practice. We are now preparing for the 2007 presidential and parliamentary elections in further consolidation of our gains in the democratic process.

Mr. President,

Sierra Leone believes that children are the best investment to ensure a bright future for our country. Consequently, we hold the view that development and respect for human rights start with them and that the MDGs represent a critical tool for achieving these goals. That is why we have increased the space for education as indicated by enrolment figures that have jumped from 659,503 in 2001/02 academic year to 1,158,399 in 2003/04.

We believe that sound administration of justice, in particular strict adherence to the tenets of the rule of law and human rights is indispensable to attainment of durable peace and political stability. Accordingly, government has reestablished civil authority all over the country, through the reopening and strengthening of judicial and law enforcement institutions, and we are in the process of establishing a National Human Rights Commission.

Two transitional institutions, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission which has just published its report and the Special Court, have contributed immensely to the peace process. It is the intention of government to implement the recommendations of the

TRC to which we attach great importance as a crucial instrument of durable peace. We thank the UN and the many friendly countries that have contributed in financial and technical forms to the work of these institutions. Let me take this opportunity to appeal to the UN, the international community and our friends to support the Special Court to enable it to accomplish its mandate.

There is no doubt that the United Nations and the international community have made important strides in addressing impunity. However, it is our belief, that the international community should do more than supporting international tribunals, Truth and Reconciliation Commissions and other mechanisms of the transitional justice system. It is our fervent hope, for example, that the process of peace and reconciliation in Sierra Leone would not end with the report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) or the end of the work of the Special Court. Reconciliation would be incomplete without addressing the special needs of the victims of the heinous crimes that were perpetrated on civilians during the armed conflict.

I would therefore make a solemn appeal to the international community to assist us in addressing the issue of supporting the victims of war crimes and crimes against humanity. It is argued that assistance has been provided for bringing the alleged criminals to justice, and that due attention has been given to ex-combatants. Within its limited resources, the Government has made every effort to address the special needs of the victims of the heinous crimes committed during the eleven year rebel armed conflict. But we need international support for these victims, through, for instance, the Fund for War Victims envisaged under the 1999 Lome Peace Agreement, and the National Commission for War Affected Children.

Mr. President,

This address will be incomplete without reference to the security situation in the West African Sub-region. While Sierra Leone is enjoying relative peace and stability and the capacity of its security forces continues to be enhanced by the International Military Advisory and Training Team, there is still an air of uncertainty in the neighbourhood and the sub-region. Because of the porosity of the borders and the historically fluid nature of the conflict in the sub-region, we will feel safe and secure only in a conflict - free region. In the light of this, I would like to appeal to the UN, the rest of the international community and our friends to continue to support measures to resolve the conflicts that have plagued the sub-region for so long and diverted scarce resources and energies from developments. But let me remind you about the imperative of recognizing the fact that the achievement of lasting peace requires wholesome measure for the entire sub-region. In particular, we recommend sub-regional approach by the UN, AU, EU, ECOWAS and other interested parties to post-conflict activities including DDR, Security Sector Reform and Post Conflict Peace Building.

Finally Mr. President, on this occasion of the debate of the Sixtieth Session of the General Assembly, we should be reminded that the United Nations is and should remain the centre for harmonizing the actions of nations in the attainment of its common objectives. The Organization belongs to us all and operates in the larger interest of all its members. Let this sixtieth anniversary be a time for recommitment to the principles and purposes of the Charter; a time for renewed determination to build on the successes of this great Organization.

I thank you Mr. President.