



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

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STATEMENT

by

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Agenda Item 84:
“The Rule of Law on
National and International Levels”

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[Please Check Against Delivery]

Mr. Chairman,

The Republic of Sierra Leone congratulates you and the Bureau on your respective elections and extend our best wishes and full cooperation throughout this 73rd Session.

The Republic of Sierra Leone respectively aligns itself with the statements delivered by the distinguished representatives of the Islamic Republic of Iran speaking on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement and The Gambia on behalf of the African Group.

Sierra Leone remains committed to the strengthening of the rule of law at the national and international levels, doing so with due regards to other international law norms including the sovereign equality of States; the value of our rules-based system and the principles enshrined in the United Nations Charter. Sierra Leone accepts the view that the need for universal adherence to the implementation of the rule of law at both national and international levels should be complemented by concrete commitments aimed at strengthening the rule of law. Taking concrete steps to strengthen the rule of law, in our view, also creates the desirable nexus to the attainment of the Sustainable Development Goals, especially Goal 16.

Sierra Leone affirms its belief that there is no single paradigm for the development of the rule of law. However, the fundamental tenets and core elements reaffirmed by the General Assembly in resolution A/72/119 must be adhered to even with the continuing evolution of the international order. The Secretary General in his report A/72/268 rightly called for continued attention to the rule of law in order to keep pace with the evolutionary nature of our societies. Sierra Leone thanks the Secretary General for his valuable reports, and the support to our rule of law and human rights programmes, specifically on community-oriented policing, women's right in customary legal proceedings, preventing and addressing sexual and gender-based violence and the work of the Residual Special Court for Sierra Leone.

Mr. Chairman,

In this 73rd Session's General Debate, the President of Sierra Leone announced to the world our continuing "commitment to democratic governance with yet another peaceful transfer of power from an incumbent political party to the opposition [...with] commendation from various parts of the world for conducting peaceful and creditable" four-tier elections. The role of the United Nations and development partners in the process was duly acknowledged. Sierra Leone is now without doubt a successful model of a stable democracy rooted in the rule of law; a status far removed from the narrative of chaos and civil conflict in just 20 years.

There is abundant evidence to demonstrate Sierra Leone's commitment to implement the "rule of law elements of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development". Sierra Leone views peace and security as the foundation to build a peaceful, just and inclusive societies. Therefore, the government is keen on implementing the Sierra Leone Truth and Reconciliation Commission's recommendation on fostering national unity and cohesion for "a new and equitable citizenship in Sierra Leone [...with a] new culture of mutual respect, understanding and tolerance by Sierra Leoneans for all Sierra Leoneans and other peoples". The implementation of the TRC's recommendation is now a presidential initiative which will be heralded by a national conference on peacebuilding, diversity management and rebuilding of national cohesion, leading to the creation of an Independent Commission for Peace and National Cohesion, to be established by an Act of Parliament.

Within the framework of implementing Goal 16 of the SDGs, Sierra Leone is co-convenor of the Pathfinder for Peaceful, Just and Inclusive Societies and its Justice Task Force to deliver on the 2030 targets. Sierra Leone, this very week, is hosting permanent representatives of the SDG 16+ Forum countries, the UN, academia, civil society and private sector to showcase its policies and practices on governance, inclusion and sustaining peace. The SDG 16+ Forum provides the platform to learn

from best practices on the implementation of Agenda 2030 through the sharing of implementation successes and challenges by the Forum States.

On access to justice, and with particular emphasis on marginalized groups, the Legal Aid Board in Sierra Leone, established by an Act of Parliament in 2012 continues to provide accessible, affordable, credible and sustainable legal aid services to indigent persons. In 2017 the Board provided legal representation and advice to 402 women and concluded 104 of their cases. This adds to the mobile complaint clinic held by the Human Rights Commission in 4 districts and addressing 44 complaints. Over 600 criminal cases were tracked by mobile application to promote transparency in the judiciary, and 1,000 correctional service cases were reviewed by the prison court and 400 inmates awaiting trial had their cases commenced. All these were done with the support of the UNDP rule of law and human rights project as noted in its *Strengthening the Rule of Law and Human Right for Sustaining Peace and Fostering Development* 2017 Report.

Mr. Chairman,

On rule of law and development, Sierra Leone in recognizing this nexus has introduced “free quality education” for pupils in all government and government assisted schools, thereby tackling the unacceptable rate of illiteracy, removing the financial burden on parents and debunking the poverty argument on the advancement of girls. The implementation commenced this September and will be in three phases, with the ultimate objective of developing the human capital base, opening up the society, and the engendering an informed citizenry. Ultimately, the information gap on policy-making and governance practices will be reduced thereby ensuring an accountable and transparent governance system.

Sierra Leone is also strongly committed to promoting accountability for atrocity crimes under international law at both the domestic and international levels. The domestication of the Geneva Conventions and the Additional Protocol I in 2012 is linked to our continuing fight against impunity for atrocity crimes. Importantly, by the domestication, Sierra Leone has aligned its domestic legal framework to fit the complementary application of existing international criminal justice mechanisms.

Mr. Chairman,

Sierra Leone continues to recognize the challenges associated with the development of the rule of law. As have been previously noted in our deliberations, developing the rule of law at the national and international levels requires capacity and capacity building. In this light, in addition to existing university programmes, Sierra Leone is in the process of establishing a Foreign Service Academy for bespoke capacity building, and welcomes the work of the United Nations Programme of Assistance in the Teaching, Study, Dissemination and Wider Application of International Law, and views a possible cooperation as a merger of the objective of strengthening peace and security through the employment of a better understanding of international law.

Mr. Chairman,

In conclusion, Sierra Leone continues to appreciate the respective fora within the United Nations Systems dedicated to the development of the rule of law, including the International Law Commission for its work in the past 70 years on the progressive development and codification of international law; the United Nations Commission on International Trade Law, with respect to the development of international commercial law and its development nexus. Sierra Leone calls for the concretization of regional balance and equity in all spheres of the United Nations system in the further development of international law.

I thank you for your kind attention.