



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

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STATEMENT

by

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at the

Sixth Committee of the United Nations General Assembly
"The rule of law at national and International levels"
Agenda Item 85

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CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

**Mme. Chair,
Excellencies,
Distinguished Delegates,**

1. The delegation of Sierra Leone is pleased to join the Sixth Committee's debate on the "rule of law at the national and international levels", particularly in light of the publication of the seminal United Nations "*Our Common Agenda: Report of the Secretary-General*", and the present importance to reflect on the COVID-19 context and its "rule of law" nexus.
2. The delegation of Sierra Leone respectively aligns this statement with the statements delivered by the distinguished representatives of **Ghana** on behalf of the African Group, and the **Islamic Republic of Iran** on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement.
3. My delegation notes the report of the Secretary-General A/76/235 summarizing the work of the UN system together with member States on promoting the rule of law, and international law, as well as the promotion and protection of human rights. We thank the Secretary-General for suggesting the sub-topic for consideration: "*Promoting a people-centred rule of law at the national and international levels as the foundation of our common agenda*".
4. Sierra Leone continues to reaffirm its commitment to the rule of law at both the national and international levels, appreciating that the rule of law is an enabler for the attainment of international peace and security, the promotion and protection of human rights and in

achieving international cooperation for sustainable development.

Mme. Chair,

5. Sierra Leone within the context of the “UN Common Agenda” acknowledges the urgent need to take action to tackle the threats to peace, threats to people, and the threats to the planet, through delivering on our social contracts in order to regain public trust and place people at the centre of our shared prosperity.
6. **At the national level**, Sierra Leone, despite the global challenges on the rule of law commitments, is delivering on the “New Direction” social contract, which is Sierra Leone’s Medium-Term National Development Plan (2019-2023), a clear expression of our nationally owned roadmap to build a society that is cohesive, secure, and just.
7. Sierra Leone continues to remove threats to democratic freedoms and human rights. We have repealed a half-a-century old seditious libel law. There is full respect for and protection of fundamental freedoms of association, conscience, expression, and the press. In fully implementing one of the significant recommendations of the Sierra Leone Truth and Reconciliation Commission, put forward as part of our transitional justice process almost 20 years ago, Sierra Leone has abolished the death penalty, following meaningful national dialogue, with clear position and directive from the President and action by the national legislature. On this very day, His Excellency President Julius Maada Bio gave his assent to the legislation

passed unanimously by Parliament to expunge the death penalty from our law books.

8. Sierra Leone has manifested consistent and effective engagement with the Universal Periodic Review process in our determination to make progress on human rights promotion and protection. We are respecting our reporting obligations under the relevant human rights conventions. At the just concluded 48th regular session of the Human Rights Committee, our 3rd Cycle UPR was adopted. Sierra Leone accepted 216 of the 274-recommendations received, and we took note of 58. The Government is committed to fully implementing all the 216 accepted recommendations to build a better human rights architecture in Sierra Leone.

Mme. Chair,

9. Despite the unprecedented challenges of COVID-19, exposing member States to heightened vulnerabilities and to rethink delivery on the SDGs, Sierra Leone in prioritizing Human Capital Development, as we continue to take action on our accelerator Goals, including SDG16 on peace, justice, and strong institutions. Sierra Leone addressed the Second SDG Moment in the High-Level Week of this 76th UNGA session and presented our third Voluntary National Review report on the SDGs in this year's High-Level Political Forum (HLPF).
10. In the HLPF, we reported on the action taken to scale up efforts towards operationalizing the Independent Commission for Peace and National Cohesion to foster social cohesion and further consolidate peace in the

country, following the enactment of the enabling legislation and appointment of the members of the board of the Commissioner, embodying an institution that is representative and gender sensitive.

11. The Judiciary continues to expand access to justice with presence established throughout the country. There has been an expansion of legal aid services to indigent and under-served persons as the Legal Aid Board provided free legal representation, advice, and related services to over 400,000 Sierra Leoneans in 2020, recording a 93% increase from 2018. Special courts to fast-track cases for sexual offences, social security, corruption, and small claims were established.

Mme. Chair,

12. **At the international level,** and on the important issue of addressing sexual and gender-based violence, His Excellency President Bio during the General Debate in this 76th session of the General Assembly urged for global solidarity on access to justice and remedies for survivors of sexual violence. Based on his directive, the delegation of Sierra Leone requested the addition of the agenda item "*International cooperation on access to justice for survivors of sexual violence*". The delegation of Sierra Leone will serve as lead sponsor of a standalone resolution on the agenda item in the General Assembly. We, therefore, call for full support by all member States to ensure this 76th session will be the one in which the United Nations "will give all survivors of sexual violence the remedy they deserve".

- 13.** In further reflecting on the rule of law landscape at the international level, the delegation of Sierra Leone uses this opportunity to reiterate our support for the strengthening of the international accountability system, in particular the strengthening of the International Criminal Court (ICC) and the work of the Residual Special Court for Sierra Leone. On the ICC, as we look forward to the debate on the “Report of the International Criminal Court” in the General Assembly plenary, we use this opportunity to commend the UN and the Secretariat for the provision of “*administrative, legal and logistical support [to the ICC] in accordance with the Relationship Agreement*” between the two Organizations. At the heart of this important cooperation are the people, the victims on whose behalf we have the accountability system for atrocity crimes. We, therefore, urge for the further strengthening of this vital cooperation as part of the people-centred “rule of law”.
- 14.** Sierra Leone continues to appreciate the Secretary-General’s annual report on the rule of law highlighting the work of the Residual Special Court for Sierra Leone. Indeed, the RSCSL “continues to monitor the enforcement of sentences of persons convicted by the Special Court for Sierra Leone, provide support services to protected witnesses and address requests for assistance from national authorities”.
- 15.** In the year under review, the RSCSL contributed to the further development of international criminal law on novel issues, including on conditional early release. The legacy of the Special Court for Sierra Leone and its Residual Mechanism must therefore be protected through adequate, predictable, and permanent funding through

the UN regular budget, whilst appreciating the current annual subventions.

16. In conclusion, **Madam Chair**, the delegation of Sierra Leone expresses the hope that the Sixth Committee will reach consensus on a sub-topic for next year's debate to encourage further dialogue and the sharing of national and best practices on specific aspects of "the rule of law at the national and international levels".

17. I thank you.