



**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
ON AGENDA ITEM 74:
“CRIMINAL ACCOUNTABILITY OF UNITED NATIONS OFFICIALS
AND EXPERTS ON MISSION”**

NEW YORK, 6th OCTOBER 2022

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**Mr. Chair,
Excellencies,
Distinguished Delegates,**

1. The delegation of Sierra Leone respectively aligns this statement with the statements delivered by the Distinguished Representatives of the Kingdom of Morocco on behalf of the African Group, and the Islamic Republic of Iran on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement, and we offer this further elaboration in our national capacity.
2. My delegation thanks the Secretary-General for his reports **A/77/225** and **A/77/237** and takes note of the content 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 criminal behaviour, for which, accountability is critical for global confidence and trust in the United Nations.
4. The focus of the UN and its Member States should be on achieving the purposes of the United Nations, and seeking solutions to address the persistent global challenges. To ensure this is done, it must be the case that UN officials and experts on mission should be held

accountable for the crimes they commit, and this requires action on credible allegations that reveal that a crime may have been committed by UN officials or experts on mission by States with jurisdiction on the one hand, and on the other hand by action through the UN system, including its agencies, funds, and programmes.

Mr. Chair,

5. Sierra Leone being a Troop and Police Contributing Country to UN peacekeeping operations, continues to build its legal and policy frameworks to strengthen criminal accountability, and to promote and cultivate an environment that limits or prevent criminal behaviour. We restate the significant step taken to ensure sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) and any act of sexual exploitation or abuse (SEA) by members of the Republic of Sierra Leone Armed Forces (RSLAF) constitutes an act of serious misconduct and thereby prohibited by both military law and the general law. In addition, the RSLAF has adopted a policy of zero tolerance on SGBV, including SEA which is being fully implemented.
6. The policy framework has been further supplemented by our first Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment Policy launched on 3rd December 2020. The now enhanced framework will be further strengthened by the

enactment of the new Gender Act as the Bill is before Parliament.

Mr. Chair,

7. In further focusing on ensuring accountability for SGBV and, in particular SEA, at the international level, my delegation is pleased to inform of the adoption by the General Assembly on 2 September 2022 of the resolution **A/76/304**, with **Sierra Leone** and **Japan** as Main Sponsors, and supported by 84 other co-sponsors, without a vote, titled “International Cooperation on access to Justice, Remedies and assistance to Survivors of Sexual Violence.”
8. Across the globe, sexual assault survivors have been hitherto inhibited in holding perpetrators accountable and accessing empowering health, legal, and economic remedies. The General Assembly resolution **A/76/304** now urges member States and UN agencies to implement access to justice and other remedies, to ensure dignity for all survivors of sexual violence.
9. The resolution **A/76/304** further urges member States to provide victims and survivors of sexual violence with access to timely and un-impeded mechanisms for justice as provided for by national legislation, and to take effective action. The resolution calls upon the United Nations system and other international and regional

organizations, within their respective mandates, as well as encourages the civil society organizations to support the efforts of the member States.

10. The resolution also emphasizes the need for adequate resources to be assigned to the United Nations system for the promotion of gender equality, the empowerment of women and the human rights of women and girls. The critical component of international cooperation forms the thrust of the resolution, and this is significant for State of nationality and host country cooperation on criminal accountability of UN officials and experts on mission.
11. On our part, following a victim-centered approach, Sierra Leone has set-up operational response mechanisms to SGBV as part of the efforts to provide remedies for victims of SGBV and SEA. The mechanism includes a Free Rape Hotline; One Stop Centres: offers medical, psychosocial, legal & safe homes; and a Sexual Offences Model Court – dedicated to trying SGBV cases. As we urge for the implementation of the resolution, we look forward to the report of Secretary-General in that regard in the 79th session of the General Assembly.

Mr. Chair,

12. All 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 in their private lives, and must be sensitive 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.

13. Training manuals on SGBV have been developed, and training programs rolled out accordingly. These trainings provide not only foundational knowledge and skills, but also support gender mainstreaming, in preventing SGBV, exploitation and abuse even in peace support and peacekeeping operations. All of these have manifested into exemplary conduct and discipline of our military and police personnel on both the African Union peace support operations and UN peacekeeping operations.
14. Sierra Leone reiterates 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.

15. Sierra Leone echoes the “no compromise” and comprehensive approach to criminal accountability, amplifying the call for zero tolerance, in fully supporting the “zero tolerance policy” on sexual exploitation and abuse throughout the UN system, and putting an end to impunity.
16. 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.
17. In closing, **Mr. Chair**, let me affirm the view that 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.
18. I thank you.