



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

STATEMENT

BY

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AT THE

79TH SESSION OF THE UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY

SIXTH COMMITTEE

THE RULE OF LAW AT NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL LEVELS

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Chair,
Excellencies,
Distinguished Delegates,

1. Sierra Leone's delegation aligns this statement with the statements delivered by the distinguished representatives of Uganda and the Islamic Republic of Iran on behalf of the African Group and Non-Aligned Movement, respectively. We provide this further elaboration in our national capacity, focusing on the sub-theme in this debate.
2. Sierra Leone reiterates its unwavering commitment to the rule of law at national and international levels. We understand that it is the cornerstone of just and equitable societies, fostering solid institutions that protect populations in conflict and peacetime.
3. We welcome the start of implementing the Secretary-General's New Vision for the Rule of Law, which builds on

Sustainable Development Goal (SDG)16 and General Assembly resolution 67/1. This New Vision recommitments the Organization to people-centered rule of law initiatives, ensuring that work is informed by and responsive to individuals' needs and grows from our collective commitment to a peaceful, prosperous, and just world with people at its center.

4. We sincerely appreciate the United Nations and its subsidiary bodies' relentless efforts to address all deterrents and fully realize the rule of law. Their capacity-building and support initiatives are crucial in tackling corruption, sexual and gender-based violence, discrimination, climate risks, and limited access to justice by the most vulnerable groups.

5. Therefore, we welcome the Secretary-General's report **A/79/117**, which outlines the UN's support for Member States' actions to advance security and justice,

substantially reduce corruption and other financial crimes, strengthen the rule of law, promote international instruments, norms, standards, and regulations, and establish international and hybrid courts and tribunals.

Chair,

6. Strengthening the rule of law is an essential step toward better governance, not least to ensure compliance with internationally accepted standards, norms, and treaties. We particularly appreciate the UN's support in Sierra Leone in strengthening the rule of law, including the recently launched Justice Sector Reform Strategy (2024-2030).

Chair,

7. Sierra Leone recognizes the critical importance of upholding human rights and the rule of law as foundational principles of a just and equitable society. The rule of law has been more glaringly crucial to accomplishing the Millennium Development Goals, and it remains a vital part

of meeting the SDGs by 2030. Our Medium-Term National Development Plan seeks to ensure that all citizens benefit from a fair, impartial, and effective justice sector by enabling increased access to justice, expedition of justice, human rights protection, and equal economic development opportunities.

8. In demonstrating Sierra Leone's solid commitment to advancing the rule of law and promoting justice and human rights, we recently launched the Justice Sector Reform Strategy (2024-2030). This Strategy rectifies the deficiencies and shortcomings in the Justice Sector Reform Strategy and Investment Plan (2019-2023). It leverages its successes to empower Sierra Leoneans to lead lives of dignity and respect, upholding the rule of law while addressing overlooked aspects of justice delivery. The overarching goal is to strengthen service delivery in the

justice sector, guaranteeing fair, impartial, and effective justice for all in Sierra Leone.

9. Our investments in the justice sector are also directly tied to our governance and human development aspirations. When citizens know their rights and how to advocate for those rights, they can hold governments accountable. This is why our investments in human capital development as part of the Big Five Game Changers are a human rights issue. When more citizens access the right to health and education, they are more likely to get a better life, engage in governance, and grow the economy.

Chair,

10. Sierra Leone's efforts to improve the justice system extend to decongesting and de-crowding the prison population. In addition to establishing specialized courts such as the Anti-Corruption Court, Sexual Offences Model Court, Social Security Court, and Small Claims Court and

revamping the Justices of Peace system, we have introduced Judicial Week. This deliberate initiative has significantly impacted 374 remand inmates admitted to bail and 234 discharged during Judicial Week this year.

11. The Judiciary has been included in the era of digitalization. It has introduced the Justice App for Magistrates' Courts to manage cases. In addition, Fast-Track Commercial Court and General Courts have a responsive website where all cases assigned, including all judgments, are uploaded to enhance transparency and accountability. This has helped to increase the Judiciary's visibility globally.

Chair,

12. The Sierra Leone Parliament passed the Criminal Procedure law in July this year. This innovative legislation marks a significant milestone in our country's rule of law process. The new law repeals and replaces the outdated

1965 Act, a process spanning over two decades before culminating in this pivotal moment. We successfully delivered on this commitment through dedicated leadership, which will help dispense with protracted court hearings and reduce pretrial detention periods, thereby decongesting correctional centers.

13. Sierra Leone believes women's empowerment and gender equality are our surest path to peace and sustainable development. Gender discrimination issues, including child marriage, have severe implications for women's socio-economic empowerment. As such, early this year, we adopted a law prohibiting child marriage, with no exceptions.

14. This is a significant step towards protecting the rights of young girls and a valuable addition to other laws aimed at protecting women and girls, including domestic and sexual violence laws. Through a gender-responsive

approach, we will make a conscious effort to ensure women participate in legal empowerment activities and receive free legal aid support for issues of gender-based violence.

Chair,

15. Adherence to the rule of law at the international level requires its consistent and non-selective application, even under challenging circumstances. This includes compliance with international law, international human rights law, and international humanitarian law.

16. Sierra Leone continues to regret the widespread and systematic disregard for the fundamental principles in the UN Charter, particularly regarding maintaining international peace and security. We further regret the flagrant violation of international law, including international humanitarian law, and the enforcement of decisions and implementation of opinions of the

International Court of Justice. As Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. said, “The arc of the moral universe is long, but it bends towards justice.” But it does not bend independently; instead, it requires people like us—diplomats, survivors, lawyers, human rights advocates, policymakers, or young people—to exert effort.

17. Therefore, we reiterate our unwavering position on consistency and good faith in applying the UN Charter and principles of international law. We also reaffirm our support for the International Criminal Court, primarily guided by our overarching policy of ensuring effectiveness and accountability in addressing impunity by strengthening the international accountability regime.

18. 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 (RSCSL). In late February this year, we hosted a global conference

to examine the Special Court's legacy and raise awareness about its contributions to international justice, peace, and security. This experience-sharing event attracted about 250 participants, including nearly all RSCSL judges, who were joined by prosecutorial actors, UN officials, politicians, and victims to discuss the future of international justice. We thank the UN and continue to solicit funding for the RSCSL.

19. In conclusion, the legitimacy of our rule of law system depends on our shared work to make the fundamental values of fairness and equality under the law a reality. Sierra Leone remains tirelessly committed to fulfilling our founding responsibilities to protect and uphold the rule of law and ensure equal justice under the law.

I thank you.