



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

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Statement by

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at the

**High Level Plenary on the Mid-Term Review
of the Programme of Action for the Least Developed
Countries for the Decade 2001-2010**

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Check Against Delivery

Madam President,
Distinguished delegates,

My delegation fully aligns itself with the statement made by His Excellency Mr. Boni Yayi, the President of the Republic of Benin on behalf of the Least Developed Countries and that of the distinguished Foreign Minister of South Africa on behalf of the Group of 77 and China.

Madam President, let me thank the United Nations System for their efforts towards, and especially the Secretary General for his informative report on progress achieved in, the implementation of the Brussels Programme of Action (BpoA) for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2001 - 2010 during the past five years. Moreover, we appreciate the work of Ambassador Anwarul Chowdury, Under Secretary-General and High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Land Locked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States, for the tremendous work and effort he and his team have put in realizing the successful conduct of the Mid-Term Review of the Brussels Programme of Action.

Distinguished Delegates, Sierra Leone was at war when the Brussels Programme of Action was signed in May 2001. However, through the concerted efforts of the international community, notably the UN system, the war formally ended in January 2002. Since then, considerable progress has been achieved in the area of peace building and development through several initiatives. These have been clearly outlined in our annual reports on the implementation of the BPoA.

Madam President, one cannot but acknowledge that countries that have experienced conflicts face enormous challenges that must be overcome if the internationally agreed development goals are to be achieved timely. We have developed and begun implementing bold policies and programmes that have reasonably positioned us to achieve the goals and targets enshrined in the BPoA.

Taking our limitations into consideration, we have identified and embarked upon the implementation of urgent priority areas within the PRSP; to meet these crucial goals.

We have created the required policy environment and put in place strategies and policy measures to make a break with the past and stop doing business as usual. Notable among these are the ongoing judicial reforms, improvement in public financial management, decentralization and effective local governance, the promulgation of an Anti-corruption Act and the setting up of the Commission to stem corruption, and repositioning the Republic of Sierra Leone Police and Armed Forces to better maintain peace and security following the withdrawal of UNAMSIL. The Government of Sierra Leone has a Mineral Policy that incorporates the Kimberley Diamond Certification Scheme (KDCS) and agreed to sign up to the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (EITI). Most recently, the Government of Sierra Leone and our budget support donors jointly signed the Improved Governance and Accountability Pact (IGAP) for Poverty Reduction and Sustainable Development. We are now in the second year of implementing the PRSP. The dismal statistics like school enrollment rates and health indicators that characterized the war period are gradually improving.

Despite these improvements, challenges abound in so far as the implementation of the Brussels Programme of Action is concerned. Poverty is endemic, infrastructure inadequate and the capacity of civil society weak. The proportion of the population living below the poverty line is staggering. There is high unemployment especially among the youthful population.

Madam President, as recognized in this year's UNCTAD Least Developed Countries Report, the lack of productive capacities in the Least Developed Countries is affecting the realization of the objectives of the Brussels Programme of Action.

Developing productive capacities is necessary for poverty reduction, and for securing the economic base for good governance. As the Secretary General noted in his report, although a number of LDCs have attained higher rates of economic growth than in the past, there is still widespread poverty; meaning that the growth rates recorded have not been translated into effective poverty reduction and improved human well-being. The major focus in the coming five years should, therefore, be on translating the positive growth rates recorded in LDCs into poverty reduction and sustained economic growth in these countries.

The achievement of the BPoA is a mutual responsibility and the support of our partners remains crucial for the achievement of our shared goals. Such support or development assistance should include debt cancellation, capacity development for effective trade, good governance and an enabling environment for investment, particularly in infrastructure. While acknowledging the efforts of our development partners, we look forward to the delivery of the resources promised for meeting the internationally agreed goals in a predictable and timely manner.

Distinguished Delegates, notwithstanding the many challenges facing the LDCs, there is a sound basis for progress. Actions by the LDCs in harnessing domestic resources coupled with the scaling up of support by the international community will prove crucial in the next five years. It is in this light therefore that we call on our development partners to support the recommendations of the Cotonou Strategy, which we see as reinforcing and furthering the implementation of the Brussels Programme of Action.

I thank you.