



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

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STATEMENT

BY

HIS EXCELLENCY DR. ERNEST BAI KOROMA
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AT THE

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CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

Mr. President,

Colleagues Heads of States,

Distinguished delegates,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am honoured once again to address this august Assembly. Let me first of all congratulate you Mr. President, on your election to direct the affairs of the 66th Session. I would like to assure you of our fullest support and cooperation throughout your tenure. I commend your predecessor, Mr. Joseph Deiss, for a job well done.

Mr. Secretary-General we appreciate your important contribution to the work of the Organization and congratulate you on your recent appointment for a second term.

On behalf of the Government and people of Sierra Leone, let me take this opportunity to welcome the Republic of South Sudan, the newest member of the UN family and of our continental organization - the African Union. We congratulate them on this achievement and wish them well.

Mr. President,

Sierra Leone is a nation with a relatively small territory and population, but our aspirations for democracy, prosperity and international peace are as big as any nation, and our commitments to these ideals have been visibly demonstrated in the course of our 50 year existence as an independent nation. We are proud of the distinctive contributions we have made to the United Nations over the past half a century in areas such as decolonization; training and research; the international civil service; disarmament and non-proliferation including small arms and light weapons; peace-making and peacekeeping; the development of international law and currently reform of the Security Council.

It is worth mentioning that soon after our admission to the United Nations we contributed a small contingent to the United Nations Peacekeeping Mission in the Congo (ONUC). Our continuing commitment to international peace is evidenced by our transformation from a nation that received one of the largest ever UN peace keeping missions in the late 1990s to a country that is today contributing troops and police officers to peacekeeping missions in Darfur. We have also developed a proposal to participate in the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM). At the same time we acknowledge with gratitude the enormous impact the United Nations family has had on the maintenance of peace, governance, and the economic and social development of my country since our admission into the organization fifty years ago.

Mr. President,

In my capacity as Chair of the AU Committee of Ten Heads of State on Security Council reform, I must emphasize that reform of the Council is urgently required for the wider UN membership to fully benefit from the purposes and primary objectives of maintaining international peace and security. There is an increasing need for the Security Council to be more representative, inclusive, and democratic as well as the need for an improvement on its working methods and its relations with the General Assembly. The present status quo is increasingly unacceptable and has the potential of undermining the legitimacy, effectiveness and efficiency of the Council's work in maintaining international peace and security. It is therefore imperative that we reaffirm our commitment to the norms and principles of this noble organization by generating the political will for a reformed Security Council that would pave the way to correct the historical injustice to Africa through the allocation of two Permanent seats and five Non-permanent seats to Africa in accordance with the UN Charter during this 66th Session.

Mr. President,

Since I addressed this Assembly last year, Sierra Leone has continued to make steady progress, particularly in the priority sectors outlined in my Government's "*Agenda for Change*" namely: agriculture, energy, infrastructure, health and education. Those five sectors were purposefully selected from many others requiring transformation because we believe they would have the greatest positive impact on the lives of our people. We have done so against the background of the unprecedented challenges facing our world today such as the rise in food and fuel prices, the global financial crisis, and the chain of unending conflicts around the world.

Inspired by the conviction that no goals or objectives, however comprehensive and however meaningful, can be achieved without a sustained determination to implement them, I have declared this year *2011 as the Year of Implementation for Sierra Leone*. Accordingly, my Government has demonstrated its commitment to that declaration. We are going to ensure that every single Sierra Leonean benefits from the dividends of our well-earned peace and democracy. In spite of the many challenges that had impeded our capacity to complete our projects, we are determined, with the cooperation and support of our development partners, to accelerate the positive transformation of our country.

It is my sincere hope that successful implementation of the projects and programmes in the UN Joint Vision for Sierra Leone aligned with the Agenda for Change would enhance Sierra Leone's attainment of the MDGs.

Mr. President,

The Sierra Leone economy like many around the world is currently encountering budgetary difficulties which can be traced to the global economic meltdown. We are however optimistic about future growth levels. We expect export levels to increase, given the substantial investment in developing our infrastructure and the ongoing revamping of our mining, agriculture and tourism sectors. We have also put in place strong corrective measures to stabilize the fiscal situation.

We have continued to build on progress achieved in the area of peace consolidation. Our democratic institutions such as the National Electoral Commission, Political Parties Registration Commission and the Anti Corruption Commission, have continued to make progress in the execution of their respective mandates.

We have also continued to build on the gains achieved in the area of human rights, gender equality and women's empowerment. The establishment of a Human Rights Commission and the presentation of our national report to the Working Group of the Universal Periodic Review of the Human Rights Council in May this year are clear manifestations of our commitment to build a human rights regime that respects international norms and practices. In June this year, the International Coordination Committee of Human Rights Institutions awarded an "A" status accreditation to the Human Rights Commission of Sierra Leone in recognition of its achievements and independence.

I have pledged my support and initiated processes that would make women constitute at least 30% of elective offices in our country.

As a State Party to many international human rights instruments we are committed to their implementation and respect our reporting obligations under the relevant conventions. We have for instance just completed our sixth periodic CEDAW report. We have ratified the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and have commissioned a National Action Plan for the implementation of UN Security Council resolutions 1325 and 1820.

Mr. President,

As we prepare for our 2012 presidential parliamentary and Local Councils elections, we are cognizant of the fact that it is our primary responsibility to organize and provide the necessary logistical requirements of this democratic process. However, we need all necessary international assistance in support of our commitment to ensure, free, fair and peaceful elections. In this regard, we have continued to dialogue with all stakeholders including the National Electoral Commission, Political Parties Registration Commission, and political parties. We remain committed to peace, security and development but the need to continue with national capacity building programmes in priority peacebuilding thematic areas beyond the 2012 elections remains crucial.

Mr. President,

Recently, peace and stability were not only threatened but painfully disturbed by pockets of armed conflict in the ECOWAS sub-region, particularly in the Mano River Union basin. However, we are encouraged by the unfolding developments and prospects of relative peace in our sister republics. At the same time, we are concerned about the continued threats posed to peace and stability by the illicit flow of small arms and light weapons across our sub-region. International cooperation and assistance are necessary to eradicate this menace. Sierra Leone for its parts recently launched a 5-year (2011-2015) Action Plan to expand the scope of its activities concerning small arms and light weapons.

Mr. President,

Considering the prevailing incidence of violence and armed conflicts in various regions of the world, the choice of the theme ***“the role of mediation in the settlement of dispute through peaceful means”*** for this year’s general debate is relevant and appropriate.

Of course, we are quite conscious of the inevitability of dispute in the conduct of inter-state as well as intra-state relations. But it is imperative to respect the set of principles enshrined in Article 2 of the UN Charter in our interaction with each other. These include: Sovereign equality of all UN Members; peaceful settlement of disputes, and prohibition of threat or use of force.

Obviously, mediation remains the best mechanism for the prevention and settlement of armed conflicts. It should be utilized to the fullest extent possible. Sierra Leone firmly believes that the United Nations should make better use of Chapter VI of the Charter; namely measures for the peaceful settlement of disputes.

We must also allow for our discussion of mediation of disputes by peaceful means to move towards resolution of threats to the international economic and financial systems. The greatest threat today to the security of most individuals in most societies stem from the non-resolution of issues relating to over-speculation of the most important food crops of the world, the rising food and fuel prices and the fact that the burdens of sacrifice for our recovery are increasingly being placed on the shoulders of the weak and the poor. In most places in the world we are seeing the rallying of the strong and powerful to protect their indulgence and the rallying of the youths, the weak and the dispossessed to secure their very lives, their dignity and humanity. The alternatives to the non-resolution of these disputes are dire. We must act now to save the world from the anger of the weak and the excessive indulgence and repression perpetrated by the strong.

Mr. President,

I would like to emphasize that international cooperation in the **peaceful settlement of disputes is the life blood of our Organization**. In all our deliberations, from global warming to human trafficking, from the threats of nuclear weapons and the scourge of abject poverty,

communicable and non-communicable diseases to ruthless natural disasters, and from the flow of illicit drugs to the seemingly unending upheavals in financial markets, we should always remember that we need each other. The world is too connected for the consequences of failure to be localized. The effects of poverty, disease, hunger and desperation can no longer be boxed and contained in a corner of a city, or a country, region or continent. We are all at each other's doorsteps and we must continue to build the structures for the peaceful resolution of our conflicts.

I thank you all for your attention.

