



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

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**STATEMENT**

*BY*

**HIS EXCELLENCY SOLOMON EKUMA BEREWA**  
VICE PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF SIERRA LEONE

*AT THE*

**61<sup>ST</sup> SESSION OF THE UNITED NATIONS  
GENERAL ASSEMBLY**

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CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

Md. President,

The delegation of the Republic of Sierra Leone wishes to congratulate you on your assumption of the responsibility of directing the work of the Sixty-First Session of this Assembly. It is our pleasure to reaffirm our confidence in your ability to run the Assembly, and to pledge our unflinching support and cooperation throughout your tenure.

Let me also take this opportunity to pay a special tribute to your predecessor, His Excellency Mr. Jan Eliason, for his commitment and diplomatic skill that enabled him to effectively manage the Assembly and helped the reform process to achieve some major successes during his presidency.

Md. President,

A year ago, the Heads of Member States of the United Nations declared their commitment to the reform of the organization in response to its experience of sixty years of existence, and to reflect its ever-expanding role within the context of the reality of the current world order. The process has been painfully slow, understandably because of the multiplicity of competing national interests. While my delegation appreciates the progress made so far, particularly in the form of the establishment of the Human Rights Council and the Peace Building Commission, we are unhappy about the sluggish pace of the Security Council reform which is close to the heart of Africa. As a Member State deeply committed to the African position on the UN reform, this delegation would like to urge the reform machinery of the Security Council to move faster so that our continent can take its rightful place in the UN organ that is responsible for the maintenance of international peace and security. Obviously, the Security Council can never be a just, democratic and representative body that it should be if Africa with fifty-three Member States in the United Nations does not have permanent representation, and one that is proportional to its size.

Also, Md. President, as a least developed country emerging from a devastating conflict, we are concerned that development has not been treated with the prominence and urgency it deserves in the reform, considering its cause and effect relationship with conflict and human rights.

This relationship is succinctly recognized in one of the outcomes of last year's High-Level Plenary Meeting of the General Assembly in the following words: "... our nations and peoples will not enjoy development without security, nor will they enjoy security in the absence of

development, and they would not enjoy either without respect for human rights." The need therefore to support development programmes, including the MDGs and NEPAD as the foundation for peace and security cannot be overemphasized.

Md. President,

We are particularly happy about the formation of the Human Rights Council whose operation, we hope, will be above the weaknesses that demoralized the dissolved Human Rights Commission. We call on all Member States, particularly the foundation members of the Council, to set and maintain standards that will justify the optimism that the new Council will refrain from practices that discredited the Human Rights Commission.

But of particular interest to us as a post-conflict country is the Peace Building Commission whose mandate is to support the recovery of post-conflict societies. We thank the Commission for choosing Sierra Leone as one of its two countries for their initial operation. We assure them of our fullest support and cooperation. As they will soon find out, if they have not done so, we are already on the path of peace building and consolidation through carefully formulated policies and activities to achieve lasting peace, security and stability which are the critical requirements for meaningful development.

We have developed a Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP) which has attracted support from a number of donor agencies and friendly countries. We have produced a Peace Consolidation Strategy paper that is to be presented to the PBC for support in addressing some of the challenges facing our country in the area of governance and Security before the forthcoming Presidential and Parliamentary Elections in 2007.

For the PBC to work in Sierra Leone on the basis of concrete, first-hand information, we have extended an invitation to them to visit Sierra Leone. We are looking forward to receiving the Commission in Sierra Leone.

Md. President,

The United Nations Peace Keeping Mission in Sierra Leone completed its mandate and closed down at the end of 2005. But the UN did not leave a complete vacuum; they left the United Nations Integrated Office (UNIOSIL) to support our post conflict recovery programme. We thank the UN for the continued support; and assure the organization that their contribution will not go in vain. We have no doubt that the combined

effort of the PBC, UNIOSIL and the Government will accomplish the desired objective of peace, security and development in the country.

The people of Sierra Leone are proud of their role in resolving their conflict and their successes in the democratic process. We had a highly successful democratic election in 2002, barely five months after the conflict ended. This was followed by local government elections that marked a governance decentralization process. Our second post conflict presidential and parliamentary elections, which will mark a leadership transition, are scheduled about this time next year. Sierra Leone cannot afford to have this watershed election wrong, but to have it right, we need assistance.

I therefore appeal to the UN, the EU and other members of the international community and our bilateral friends to continue to help us, both financially and technically, to make the elections another milestone achievement in the Sierra Leone peace and democratic processes.

Md. President,

The people of Sierra Leone are conscious of the fact that the peace they now enjoy is a product of the support of, and cooperation with, the United Nations and the international community. At this stage of our history the country is faced with three sets of challenges as a nation. We must rectify accumulated errors of past policies, we must repair the damages and heal the scars left by the conflict and we must chart an appropriate path for development of a small country in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. We have the natural resources to take us through. With time our human resources will measure up. Above all at this time we need the sustained engagement of international partners. This is why we are seeking to expand and reinforce our partnerships with the external world. Partnerships that can support us now, and remain with us as we pursue the longer-term agenda for sustainable development.

Finally, Md. President, the peace in Sierra Leone cannot be sustained in isolation in a conflict ridden region. We therefore urge the United Nations to continue its effort to pursue durable peace in the West African Sub-region.

I thank you, Md. President.