



**Statement by the Delegation of the Republic of Sierra Leone
to the Seventh Session of the ICC Assembly of States Parties**

Mr President,

I am honoured to address this Seventh Session of the ICC Assembly of States Parties on behalf of the Republic of Sierra Leone. On behalf of my delegation, I would like to congratulate Ambassador Christian Wenaweser on the assumption of his office as President of the ASP. We look forward to working with you in the discharge of your functions with the same commitment you so ably demonstrated as Chair of the Working Group on the Crime of Aggression. We would also like to thank President Kirsch for his tremendous work over the past five years and wish him every success as he turns this new page. The Sierra Leone delegation aligns itself with the statement made by Tanzania on behalf of the African Group.

Mr President, we continue to welcome the opportunity afforded by this general debate to highlight important policy issues for our delegation and to exchange views on these matters with other States Parties and with the non-governmental organisations whose work and contributions are of enormous importance to the effectiveness of the Court in its fight against impunity.

It seems that every year brings new developments, new successes and new challenges for international criminal justice. This past year has been no different: the Court has made important advances with some of its cases and with its strategic planning and priorities. Equally, there have been some significant set-backs and there is an ongoing need for improvement in several areas, both within and outside the Court. In this respect, we look forward to the completion of the work of the Special Working Group on the definition of the crime of aggression and on the conditions for exercise of jurisdiction over this crime.

Mr President, cooperation, particularly on the execution of arrest warrants, is perhaps the most important external need that continues to cast a shadow over the Court's capacity to implement its mandate fully. In that respect there are two issues that need to be resolved. The first is the very practical matter of cooperation by States and international organisations with appropriate mandates to arrest those persons for whom arrest warrants are outstanding. We agree the success of the Court cannot be measured by the number of accused standing trial before it, but the rule of law and the rights of victims demand that

arrest warrants, when issued, be acted upon swiftly. The second aspect is implementing legislation, and in this respect we were glad to hear about the important progress being made by so many States. To this, we are pleased to inform you that work in Sierra Leone on the draft implementing legislation is continuing and we hope that, after a nation-wide outreach campaign on this issue undertaken with civil society active on this issue, adoption will follow soon thereafter.

Mr President, my delegation - like many others - continues to stress the fact that robust outreach is critical for the court to fulfil its mandate, undertake its work effectively and efficiently and maximise its impact on local populations. We welcome the progress that has been made in this area over the past 12 months and commend the Court for the creative work it has been doing on the development of its outreach tools. We are, however, deeply concerned about the minimal amounts of outreach done in Central African Republic and in Sudan. Nature abhors a vacuum, and the vacuum created by the lack of engagement and the dissemination of correct information by the Court in those two countries is being filled by misinformation. This will not only make the Court's work harder in the future, it will also have financial implications due to the greater amount of outreach that will be required. Mr President, at the last Assembly we gave the Court a grace period to show us what it could accomplish on outreach with the resources allocated to it during this Assembly's Sixth Session. My delegation believes the time has come for a full review to be done of the Court's performance in this area, to chart the successes and challenges and to have a full picture of what now needs to be done. We would also like to see such a review done more generally on the Court's field presence in general, which seems to be rather minimal.

Mr President, we have heard a lot about so-called "African justice", in the newspapers, on the radios and television, and in many other arenas. My delegation would like to underscore the fact that the ICC is a product of the work of all countries in the world and that for Sierra Leone, the ICC is African justice just as much as it is European, Latin-American, or indeed any other kind of justice. It is a justice that needs support from other accountability mechanisms to achieve universal justice, but we would like to state clearly that it is needed, also in Africa. In this regard, we also welcome efforts to enhance the effectiveness of the international criminal justice system of which the ICC is only one part, including the Justice Rapid Response Mechanism.

Mr President, before concluding I would like to reiterate the support of the Republic of Sierra Leone and her President, His Excellency Dr Ernest Bai Koroma, to the ICC and to justice, which together with peace are the twin pillars of sustainable development and a prosperous future. We would also like to thank "No Peace Without Justice" for their ongoing cooperation and support.

Thank you