



**THE REPUBLIC OF SIERRA LEONE STATEMENT**

by

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to

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*[Please Check Against Delivery]*

**Mr. President,  
Honourable Ministers,  
Excellencies,  
Distinguished Delegates,**

I have the honour to address this Assembly on behalf of the Republic of Sierra Leone.

Sierra Leone extends her thanks and congratulations to you, Mr. President, and members of your Bureau for a successful first year. My delegation also thanks Judge Eboe-Osuji, the President of the International Criminal Court (ICC or Court), for his leadership, the various organs especially the Office of the Prosecutor and staff of the Court, the Secretariat of the Assembly of States Parties and civil society for their continued commitment to advancing the work of the Court.

Permit me, Mr. President to also congratulate Vice-President Horslund, the members of the new Board of Directors of the Trust Fund for Victims and the Advisory Committee on the nomination of judges on their respective elections.

**Mr. President,**

20 years ago, whilst the diplomatic conference was negotiating the text that would eventually be adopted as the Rome Statute, the people of Sierra Leone were experiencing untold destruction caused by the commission of war crimes and crimes against humanity during the rebel-initiated war which claimed the lives of thousands of innocent civilians in the decade between March 1991 and January 2002. At the end of the conflict, and in pursuit of true transitional justice then outside the capability of the people of Sierra Leone, the Government requested in June 2000 United Nations assistance to establish the Special Court for Sierra Leone (SCSL). Our agreement, signed in January 2002, empowered the SCSL to prosecute persons who bore “the greatest responsibility,” for the atrocities. 20 years on, the work of the Special Court is all too known to this body, and now a residual mechanism. In 20 years, Sierra Leone has consolidated her peace, and enhanced her democratic, multi-party governance system.

We accordingly celebrate 20 years of the Rome Statute and place enormous value on the Court’s collective achievements in the drive to address impunity for atrocity crimes. Often when the Court or the international criminal accountability system is confronted with political challenges, we tend to lose sight of such achievements and their direct impact on peace, security and justice, especially for the victims. As we look forward to the future, Sierra Leone will continue to support a strong ICC and the Rome Statute system. This system of ensuring accountability for atrocity crimes is founded on the principle of complementarity and inter-state cooperation. For it to work, it should emphasize the strengthening of the domestic capacity of States Parties to investigate, prosecute and punish the perpetrators of atrocity crimes. The ICC will step only as a last resort, when States Parties are unable or unwilling to do so.

Sierra Leone, therefore, welcomes the resolve by States Parties to reaffirm the important role of the ICC, to stress the need for greater state cooperation with it and to underline our unflinching commitment to preserve the integrity and independence of the ICC in the omnibus resolution to be adopted this session.

**Mr. President,**

Sierra Leone commends and joins the call for more enhanced means to address the needs of victims in the Court.

On cooperation, Sierra Leone believes that the legal framework in the ICC Statute would work if States Parties carry out the Court's requests in good faith, especially concerning outstanding arrest warrants. At the same time, Sierra Leone welcomes the progress of the MLA Initiative, as it would bolster the current cooperation framework to the benefit of the ICC and the fight against impunity.

Sierra Leone also joins the call for the mainstreaming of a gender perspective in the workings of the court, and true pursuit of equitable geographical representation at all levels of the Court's system. Equitable geographical representation is emphasised within the context of integrity in the electoral or appointment processes ensuring competence, fairness and transparency. A truly representative ICC supports the case for universality.

In concluding, **Mr. President**, Sierra Leone, a true example of a country that has gained from our collective resolve to address impunity, pledges full support to the Court and the Rome Statute system to foster international criminal accountability.

I thank you for your kind attention.