



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

STATEMENT

BY

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**AT THE TWENTY-FOURTH SESSION OF THE ASSEMBLY OF
STATES PARTIES TO THE ROME STATUTE OF THE
INTERNATIONAL CRIMINAL COURT (ICC) ON AGENDA ITEM:
GENERAL DEBATE “CONCRETE MEASURES TO STRENGTHEN
THE INTERNATIONAL CRIMINAL COURT”**

**World Forum, The Hague, Netherlands
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Madam President,
Excellencies,
Distinguished Delegates,

1. Sierra Leone welcomes the timely theme for this General Debate and the call for concrete measures to strengthen the International Criminal Court at this defining moment for the Rome Statute system. This is therefore not a routine Assembly. It is a test of our collective resolve.
2. Over the past year, the only permanent international criminal court has faced coordinated attempts to undermine its authority. Sanctions have been imposed on nine elected officials, six Judges, the Prosecutor and the two Deputy Prosecutors, for doing nothing more than carrying out their mandate. A sophisticated cyberattack has sought to infiltrate the Court's systems and disrupt its operations. These acts strike at the heart of the Rome Statute system and at the principle of judicial independence on which international criminal justice rests.

3. Yet, despite these pressures, the Court has continued to investigate, to hold trials, to deliver judgments and to advance reparations. This resilience shows both the courage of its officials and the enduring truth of the Rome Statute vision, that no one is above the law and that justice for the most serious crimes is indispensable to lasting peace.

4. Sierra Leone therefore reaffirms its unwavering commitment to the Court and to the principles of universality and integrity enshrined in the Rome Statute. Our own experience has taught us that peace without justice is fragile, and that accountability for serious crimes is the surest safeguard for stability. Sierra Leone therefore remains committed to defending the Court's integrity, promoting the values of the Rome Statute, and advancing the cause of justice as an indispensable pillar of international peace and security.

Madam President,

5. In the face of threats and coercive measures, the Court's credibility now depends on concrete and sustained

action by States Parties. The Assembly must move from expressions of concern to practical measures. In Sierra Leone's view, four areas of commitment are particularly urgent.

6. **First**, we must **protect the independence, security and integrity of the Court**. The sanctions imposed on the Court's elected officials are unacceptable and incompatible with international law; they must not become the new normal. The Assembly should take a further step by reinforcing the mechanism for collective response to such attacks, developed following the Independent Expert Review and the Review Mechanism to implement recommendation 169, combining diplomatic, operational and, where appropriate, legal measures.
7. Enhanced cybersecurity cooperation with the host State and other partners, together with strengthened security and support for Court officials, staff and those who cooperate with the Court, should form part of a broader resilience package. If we do not protect those who deliver justice, we weaken justice itself.

8. **Second, cooperation and complementarity must be deepened.** Thirty-three arrest warrants remain outstanding. Each unexecuted warrant represents an open wound for victims and a gap in our promise to fight impunity. Sierra Leone calls upon States Parties to fulfil their legal obligations: to execute warrants, facilitate investigations, and enforce sentences and reparations orders.
9. On complementarity, we support the Office of the Prosecutor and other organs of the Court engaged in capacity-building in consenting countries, so that strong national systems can shoulder their primary responsibility to investigate and prosecute Rome Statute crimes.
10. **Third, universality and the equality of justice** must be reinforced. The legitimacy of the Court rests on its reach and on the equal application of the law. Sierra Leone welcomes Ukraine's ratification of the Rome Statute. We urge all States that have not yet done so to ratify the Statute and the relevant amendments, including those on the crime of aggression. We regret withdrawals and

notifications of withdrawal, and we appeal to those States to reconsider.

11. **Fourth, victims must remain at the centre**, and the Trust Fund for Victims must be sustainably financed. Victims are the moral core of the Rome Statute system; their participation gives meaning to our work. Supporting victims is not an optional extra. It is justice delivered in full.
12. We therefore urge all States Parties to provide predictable and sustained resources for the Trust Fund's dual mandates of assistance and reparations, and to build stronger partnerships between the Trust Fund, relevant international agencies and national authorities so that victim rehabilitation is integrated into broader development and recovery frameworks.
13. Let me close, **Madam President**, by reiterating Sierra Leone's firm belief that international criminal justice is a cornerstone of international peace and the rule of law. At this critical moment, neutrality in the face of attacks on the Court is not an option.

14. We must stand with the ICC, advocate for universality, promote cooperation and support the Trust Fund for Victims. By acting with unity and urgency today, we honour the promise made in Rome in 1998, that future generations shall not continue to suffer the scourge of atrocity crimes with impunity.

I thank you.