



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

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STATEMENT

by

H.E. PROF. DAVID J. FRANCIS

Minister of Foreign Affairs
and International Cooperation

at the Twentieth session of the Assembly of States Parties of
the International Criminal Court

Agenda Item:

“General Debate”

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Madam President,

1. The Republic of Sierra Leone congratulates you on your election as President of the Assembly of States Parties and commends you on your driven and excellent leadership.
2. Similarly, as this is the first Assembly general debate during their respective terms in office, I congratulate the President of the International Criminal Court, **Judge Piotr Hofmanski** and Prosecutor **Mr. Karim Asad Ahmad Kahn**, on their respective elections.
3. In this twentieth session of the ASP herald by leadership changes in the Court, I also congratulate the six newly elected judges, including **Judge Miatta Maria Samba** of Sierra Leone. I use this opportunity to thank all States Parties that supported Judge Samba, and also applaud the gender parity achieved in the judiciary with the election of the six new judges.
4. Sierra Leone fully appreciates that the leadership of the Court, in particular both the President and Prosecutor are already engaged with work on strengthening the Court, one of the key priorities of the Presidency of the ASP and the Assembly as a whole.

Madam President,

5. Since the Court began sittings in July 2002, Sierra Leone notes that the ICC is in a consequential time, albeit a period with full optimism, given the seamless leadership transitions in the Court, its ongoing review process, and the constructive resolution of external threats. Ultimately, there is momentum to complete the review process to strengthen the Court, with a focus on achieving impartial justice for atrocity crimes without fear or favour and being responsive to the plight of the victims.

6. Sierra Leone therefore commends the Court for the remarkable business continuity and judicial developments, despite the continuing challenges of the COVID19 pandemic. Fundamentally, the wheels of international justice continue to turn at the ICC. With the regrettable continuing perpetration of atrocity crimes globally, the relevance of the ICC's mandate cannot be overemphasized.
7. Consequently, Sierra Leone agrees with the vision of the Court being a “universal, responsive, flexible and resilient organization” with a consistent outlook toward continuous improvement. A critical part to achieve this vision of the Court is through the successful completion of the review process, and that is why Sierra Leone has been actively engaged in the review, and the work of the Review Mechanism.
8. I take this opportunity to commend the Review Mechanism for the work done, and result achieved thus far, including in the adoption of the Comprehensive Action Plan, and the assessment of prioritized recommendations agreed to be undertaken by the second half of 2021.
9. Sierra Leone would urge for continued support and constructive engagement with the Review Mechanism, and the ASP Mandates undertaking the review related work, aimed at improving the performance, efficiency, and effectiveness of the Court's operation. We also welcome and commend the Court and its focal points for their efforts in the review process.

Madam President,

10. Sierra Leone once again reiterates our “*unwavering support for the Court as an independent and impartial judicial institution*”, and this restatement of support to the Court is a way of reiterating our commitment to the victims. We recall and restate that “at the heart of the work of the Court are the

victims, on whose behalf we have this accountability system". We therefore acknowledge and commend the Trust Fund for Victims for the discharge of its mandate.

11. It is in recognition of the important work of the Trust Fund for Victims that the Government of Sierra Leone, on the recommendation of the Judicial and Legal Service Commission, nominated **Mr. Ibrahim Sorie Yillah** for election to the one seat allocated to African States in the election of members of the Board of Directors of the Trust Fund for the benefit of victims. With his recognized competence in the assistance of victims of serious crimes, Sierra Leone extends its thanks for your support.

12. In closing, **Madam President**, let me use this occasion to pay tribute to the Deputy Prosecutor **Mr. James Stewart**, for his commitment and outstanding contributions to the Court as he completes his term in office. As we proceed to elect two new Deputy Prosecutors this session, it is important that the universal character of the Court be reinforced by not only gender and linguistic representations, but significantly equitable geographical representation in all aspects of the work of the Court.

13. **I thank you.**