



REPUBLIC OF SIERRA LEONE

Fourth Session of the Assembly of States Parties  
General Debate

Statement delivered by Ambassador Allieu I. Kanu, Head of Delegation of Sierra Leone

CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

Mr President, Distinguished delegates,

At the outset allow me to express our congratulations for your election to the Presidency and assure you of my delegation's support for you and the members of the new Bureau. It would be remiss of me if I did not also extend my thanks and express my admiration for the outgoing President, Prince Zeid of Jordan, and say what an honour and privilege it was to work closely with him and with the other members of the outgoing Bureau. My delegation also aligns itself with the statement by Nigeria on behalf of the African Group.

It is with great pleasure that I take the floor to make a general statement on behalf of my delegation. We are very pleased that through the scheduling of this General Debate, delegations have an opportunity to discuss common visions, policy priorities and issues of concern, beyond the very specific topics that are the object of our discussions and negotiations within the Working Groups of this Assembly.

Mr President, this fourth session of the Assembly of States Parties is in many ways as historic as the first session, held in New York in 2002. This fourth session is the first session after indictments and arrest warrants have been issued by the Court.



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It is also the first time we meet after the number of States Parties has reached triple figures and for this, we would like to extend our sincere welcome and congratulations to Mexico for becoming the 100th State Party. This 100th ratification is an important political marker and a critical building block towards the goal we all share of universal ratification of the Rome Statute. Indeed, together with civil society and a diverse range of other actors, we must keep our focus on achieving the goal of universal ratification, to strengthen the international criminal justice system, to support States in abiding by their sacred obligation to prosecute or extradite those accused of the most serious crimes of concern to humankind, and – most importantly – to protect victims and prevent the victimisation of future generations. Together we must strive to continue to increase the numbers of ratifications, and we look forward to working with others to achieve this goal.

Mr President, the promise of justice and accountability is an essential element in the search for peace. The fulfilment of that promise is essential for the maintenance of peace. For the ICC to have an impact on peace, to achieve its mandate and potential in contributing to conflict resolution and prevention, and in the restoration of the rule of law, the ICC must undertake effective Outreach, it must ensure its mandate, mission and limitations are understood by its ultimate clients: the population affected by crimes falling within the Court's jurisdiction.

The importance of Outreach is one of the major lessons we can learn from the ad hoc tribunals. We were gratified that this lesson was learnt by the Special Court for Sierra Leone, which benefited immensely from outreach done by both the Court and by NGOs. Engaging the population in interactive dialogue with and about the Court is not a luxury, it is absolutely essential for the system to work at all, and has yielded substantial returns for Sierra Leone's investment in accountability as a path to sustainable peace.



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Based particularly on our own experience, we are firmly convinced that the ICC must, as one of its main priorities, design and implement effective Outreach in the field, in each country where it operates. These programs must be based on clear, coherent and consistent strategies that focus on the specific conditions of each country and are flexible enough to adapt to changing needs, that contain appropriate indicators to enable ongoing assessment of its effectiveness and that are developed in consultation with local actors and those non-government experts who have both the experience and the expertise to assist the Court. The Court should treasure their expertise, as it is going to need their help: we know we did.

The Court should also be given clear policy priorities by the Assembly, which has its own responsibility in providing effective guidance on non-judicial matters. To that end, we would suggest that, based on the clear interest expressed in each of the working groups at this session of the Assembly of State Parties, the Bureau might wish consider establishing a Focal Point on Outreach, charged with collecting concerns and comments from all delegations, in preparation for the much improved report on the strategy, planning and implementation of outreach activities which we all expect from the Court at the next session.

Mr President, we referred at the beginning of our intervention to the historic first gathering of this Assembly in New York. Since then, we have grown in number and we have moved our meetings to the seat of the Court, here in The Hague. My delegation appreciates both the symbolic and the practical significance of this move. For all these benefits, there nevertheless remain very real limitations this location presents for access by some States Parties. We are grateful to the efforts of those who, particularly through the Trust Fund, have helped delegations such as my own to attend this crucial meeting of the Assembly, at which States Parties take



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important decisions. These measures, however, do not guarantee the participation of all delegations, including having sufficient members to follow the numerous and complex discussions. We note with some concern the empty seats in this Chamber, which we know not to be due to a lack of interest in the proceedings. Therefore, Mr President, my delegation renews its commitment to continue to work together with other delegations to ensure that an appropriate balance is found in our deliberations, reflecting the spirit of Article 112 of the Statute, so that all States Parties have a real opportunity to take part in the important deliberations and to contribute to the decision-making of this august Assembly.

Mr President, as an early party to the Rome Statute, Sierra Leone has supported and will continue to support the Court as a key element of an effective system of international criminal justice. As a country emerging from conflict, as one that has chosen accountability and the restoration of the rule of law as the main vehicle to sustainable peace, we can attest first-hand to the crucial role of international criminal justice in ending conflict and restoring public confidence in the country and in its the future.

To reap these benefits for the world and for future generations, we must strengthen our efforts towards universal ratification of the Rome Statute and we must assist the Court in providing it with a clear mandate to give priority to Outreach as the most important non-judicial aspect of its work.

Thank you.