

All Political Parties Youth Association Delegates' Conference

STATEMENT BY MR. BERHANEMESKEL NEGA

DEPUTY HEAD OF MISSION

3 December 2010

Your Excellency Dr. Ernest Bai Koroma, President of the Republic of Sierra Leone,

Honorable members of Cabinet

Leaders of Political Parties,

Honorable members of Parliament

Your worship the Mayor of Makeni,

Traditional leaders

Distinguished delegates

Ladies and gentle men,

Mr. Chairman,

Allow me to begin my short statement by conveying the best wishes on the Executive representative of the Secretary – General, Mr. Michael von der Schulenburg to the participants of this historic conference. He is currently co-hosting with the Government of Sierra Leone a regional conference on youth unemployment in the West African Sub-region – an issue also of interest to the participants of this conference. He will join you at the closing your conference tomorrow and reassure you the United Nations continued support to your laudable efforts.

Mr. Chairman,

In a relatively short peacetime since the end of the conflict in 2002, Sierra Leone has made significant strides in the consolidation of peace and advancing a democratic process through two successive free and fair democratic elections, that saw a peaceful transfer of power from one democratically elected Government to another. It has restored and is consolidating civil authority throughout the country and is consolidating national institutions', and has implemented far-reaching reforms, especially in the security sector, as well as in Local Governacace and decentralization.

With these and many other measures, Sierra Leone not only has made significant strides, but also has distinguished itself as a success story, including for the UN and international community's engagement, and has become a positive model to be emulated by countries emerging out of conflict situations and others.

However, we all recognize these achievements are fragile, and therefore, need to be consolidated and sustained, and the responsibility for that rests with the people, Government and national institutions, including political parties, including their youth and women wings.

Today's conference of national delegates of political youth from all the four major parties is a response to that call for national ownership and leadership.

The establishment of APPYA should not be viewed as undermining political party structures or party loyalty. To the contrary, it should be welcomed as a commitment to peaceful political completion that serves well the consolidation of the democratic dispensation and multi-party political system in the country.

For a country such as Sierra Leone where the youth is often identified with violence, both as victims and perpetrators, the establishment of APPYA signifies a historic break with the past and embracing a brighter and more peaceful future for the country and people, especially the younger generation.

The high priority and attention that HE the President accorded to the establishment of APPYA with his presence at this delegate's conference, despite his heavy schedules would indeed bring APPYA the much needed encouragement and recognition at this current formative phase of its existence.

Likewise, we are pleased with the high-level representation of the leadership of the major political parties, which also signifies commitment on their part to APPYA's work.

The United Nations family in Sierra Leone, especially UNIPSIL have established a very positive working relationship with APPYA and had effectively collaborated on various occasions, especially in monitoring a number of parliamentary and local council bye-election, such as those held in Bombali, Pujehun and BO and are planning similar joint efforts for the Kono district Local council bye- election this month.

With the 2012 elections approaching Appya will continue to be one of our main partners. The UN will continue to support APPYA's capacity in particular the implementation of its strategic plan to ensure that its relevance goes beyond 2012 and is sustained.

Thank you.