

SIERRA LEONE

Statement to the Security Council

Michael v. d. Schulenburg
Executive Representative of the Secretary-General

New York, 22 March 2010

Mr. President,
Honorable Members of the Security Council,

I thank you for this opportunity to introduce the Fourth Report of the Secretary-General on the activities of UNIPSIL. As you have the full report in front of you, let me here only highlight recent developments in relation to the three critical issues for Sierra Leone's peace and stability that are regularly reviewed by this Council: youth unemployment, illicit drug trafficking and corruption. Let me also introduce for the first time, a fourth issue for future reference and review: the 2012 elections. At the end, I would like to make three brief additional points.

Fighting Youth Unemployment: Despite the magnitude and political significance of this social problem, relatively little progress has been made. Over the last two years, there have been many plans and assessments but they have resulted in relatively few tangible programmes that would significantly impact the lives of a sizable number of the youth. I believe the responsibility for this must be equally shared by the Government and its international development partners.

Largely as a result of the recent Peacebuilding Commission's visit to Sierra Leone, the relevant government ministries and all relevant development partners have come together over the last few days and agreed to develop one integrated national programme in support of creating employment opportunities for the youth in various economic sectors. On the Government side this integrated national employment programme will be led by Sierra Leone's Youth Commissioner and include a number of line ministries and national authorities; on the international side the programme will include technical and financial support from the World Bank, GTZ, UNDP, ILO, UNIDO and the European Community. The joint outline for this integrated programme will be presented to the Peacebuilding Commission on Friday of this week.

Mr. President, this will only be the second time that development partners have agreed with the Government on one joint programme in a crucial area for peacebuilding and I would like to stress here the important role that the PBC can play, and indeed did play, in rallying international support behind a critical development issue.

Fighting Illicit Drug Trafficking: Over the last six months, tangible progress was made in the fight against illicit drug trafficking. The Government has established the Joint Drug Interdiction Taskforce and the Taskforce has begun its work. With the help of UNODC and in accordance with the West Africa Coast Initiative it will now be up-graded to a Transnational Crime Unit. UNODC and UNIPSIL's UN Police Unit coordinate international assistance coming from the United Kingdom, the United States, Germany and Italy making this an example for international collaboration for other countries in the sub-region. Sierra Leone's model character in building strong institutions to fight illicit drug trafficking and other international crime was underlined during a recent

conference that brought together ministers from Guinea-Bissau, Cote d'Ivoire and Liberia in Freetown under the leadership of Antonio Costa, Director-General of UNODC.

Closely linked to fighting international crime is the urgent need to beef up coastal security to combat illicit maritime drug trafficking, illegal fishing and the beginnings of human trafficking and piracy. In October of last year, the PBC launched an appeal for two de-commissioned 30-meter patrol vessels, one for Sierra Leone and the other for Liberia. We still hope that we will be successful with this appeal as this would allow these two countries to work together in fighting a common threat to their peace and development. Such bilateral cooperation could form the nucleus for wider regional cooperation that would not only benefit the security in West Africa but also help improve security in Europe and other countries bordering the Atlantic.

Fighting Corruption: Mr. President, over the last few months, Sierra Leone has taken some unprecedented bold steps in fighting corruption. A string of arrests and convictions on corruption charges have taken place that not only concentrated on lower ranking officials but that targeted also senior government officials and cabinet ministers including close political associates of the President. In January of this year, the director of the National Revenue Authority was suspended following an investigation by the Anti-corruption Commission; on 11 March the former Minister of Health was sentenced to five years of prison on corruption charges and on 15 March the Permanent Secretary and the Minister of Fisheries were indicted on corruption charges and relieved of their duties. In particular, the last case will be of great political significance as the indicted Minister of Fisheries has a strong following within the governing party, the APC and had played

a crucial role in securing the President's party nomination for the 2007 elections.

Mr. President, closely connected to the issue of corruption is the need for the proper management of the country's rich mineral and natural resources. A recently concluded contract on mining iron ore has raised considerable criticism and concerns among knowledgeable experts. Sierra Leone's newly enacted mining law should apply to all mining contracts. I also urge the Government to fully comply with the requirements of the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative, the EITI. The UN stands ready in providing all necessary legal advice and technical support to help protect Sierra Leone from being taken unfair advantage off while seeking foreign investments for its development.

Preparing for the 2012 Elections: In 2012, Sierra Leone will hold three important elections: the presidential, parliamentary and local elections. All internal and international observers agree that these elections will pose some very difficult and complex challenges for the country and that special efforts will be required by all stakeholders to ensure that these elections are fair, transparent and free from violence. Unfortunately, politics in Sierra Leone have become increasingly ethnic based and the country is today largely divided North – South along tribal and political loyalties. Recent by-elections would indicate that this divide is further deepening.

For these reasons, we have agreed with the Government to start the process of preparing for the 2012 elections early. An election needs assessment team has recently visited Sierra Leone and will be followed by an election programming mission to develop the required technical and financial assistance package. In parallel we are engaging in a series of multi-party talks with the aim of identifying and mitigating

major political, economic and social problem areas that could negatively impact the conduct the 2012 elections. The Joint Communiqué that was signed by political parties one year ago forms the basis of this dialogue. In the dialogue we have taken up also more sensitive issues such as ethnic loyalties in party politics, the 'winners takes all' syndrome, political party financing, etc.

Mr. President, allow me to make here three additional points:

First, today, we are less worried that the situation in neighboring Guinea could spill over into Sierra Leone. However, with the situation in Guinea improving, we have now to think more in taking a regional approach to peacebuilding and peace consolidation. In this context, the MRU is of great interest to us as it brings together four West African countries that have either come out of civil wars or that are in the process of ending internal conflicts.

Second, so far, we have not been successful in raising the necessary financial resources to implement our peacebuilding strategy, the Joint UN Vision. This poses fundamental credibility issues for us; ultimately, the lack of funding could even jeopardize our new approach to peacebuilding. The additional funding that we are seeking to mobilize through our Multi-donor Trust Fund are only US\$ 200 million. In other words, the additional funding required for four years of peacebuilding would be equivalent to the costs of only four months of the previous peacekeeping operations back in 2004. In this context, I would like to thank the French ambassador for having taken up this key issue in a Security Council debate last month. I hope that the Council will continue to debate this important issue and consider not only institutional aspects of such a transition from peacekeeping but also its financial implications.

Third: I feel that Sierra Leone is a good example for why the Peacebuilding Commission, the peacebuilding fund and the peacebuilding support office are so important for what we as an integrated peacebuilding mission want to achieve on the ground. I would like to thank in particular the chair of the PBC's configuration for Sierra Leone, Ambassador John McNee and his colleagues from the Canadian mission for their unwavering support. I would also like to thank the Permanent Representatives of Liberia, Poland, Peru, the Republic of Korea and of course also Ambassador Mayr-Harting from Austria who is here present for having taken the trouble of travelling all the way to Sierra Leone despite their busy schedules. Let me here also recognize the excellent work that is being done by Judy Cheng-Hopkins and her team of the PB Support Office. We now feel truly supported.

Finally, but most importantly, let me thank the President of Sierra Leone, Dr. Ernest Bai Koroma, his colleagues in the Government, members of the opposition and indeed all Sierra Leoneans for their support of the work of UNIPSIL and the UN country team. Any success that we have is ultimately only their success.

Thank you for your attention.