

**ADDRESS BY HON. JOSEPH BANDABLA DAUDA, MINISTER OF FOREIGN
AFFAIRS AND INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION OF THE REPUBLIC OF SIERRA
LEONE AT THE 67TH SESSION OF THE UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY
- NEW YORK, 1ST OCTOBER 2012**

**Mr. President,
Mr. Secretary-General,
Excellencies Heads of State and Government,
Distinguished delegates,**

It is a distinct honour for me to convey the sincere regrets of my President, H.E. Dr. Ernest Bai Koroma who, for unavoidable circumstances, is unable to address the 67th Session of this august Assembly, and on whose behalf I am so privileged to take this podium.

I wish to join the previous distinguished speakers in congratulating you Mr. President on your election to direct the affairs of this Session and to assure you of my delegation's fullest support and cooperation throughout your tenure. To your predecessor, H.E. Mr. Nassir Abdulaziz Al-Nasser, let me commend and thank him for the skilful manner in which he efficiently conducted the affairs of the last Session.

My profound appreciation also goes to the Secretary-General, H.E. Ban Ki-moon, for his tireless efforts in advancing the United Nations' agenda to make the world a peaceful and safer place for mankind.

Mr. President,

Your choice of the theme "*adjustment or settlement of international disputes or situation by peaceful means*" is a timely wake-up call for the United Nations to fully embrace the fundamental principle upon which our organization was established. Indeed, it is only with these 'adjustments' and the practical manifestation of our collective commitment to peaceful co-existence that we can, as a global family, successfully tackle the myriad of prevailing global challenges of poverty, hunger, gross and systematic violation of human rights, extremist fundamentalism, terrorism, transnational organized crime as well as the reconstruction and strengthening of fragile states and economies emerging from conflict. It is in this context that we should remind ourselves that just a little over a year ago, this Assembly adopted a landmark resolution on mediation that recognized its growing usefulness as a means of preventing disputes from escalating into conflicts and as a cost-effective tool in the peaceful settlement of disputes and prevention of conflicts.

Amidst these security challenges and global economic uncertainties, the African continent continues to strive hard to contain and address the resurgence of conflicts in the region by peaceful means. At the regional and sub-regional levels, the year under review has been marred by sporadic terrorist strikes by extremists, leading to extensive loss of lives and massive destruction of property, including coveted world heritage sites and the recent killing of four American diplomats in Libya. Sierra Leone strongly condemns such brutal and cowardly acts and will continue to work closely with all partners, particularly within the framework of the Mano River Union, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the African Union and the United Nations in seeking a lasting solution to this scourge.

Mr. President, Distinguished Delegates,

The use of Preventive Diplomacy in the maintenance of international peace and security was, until quite recently, not the strongest point of the UN system. Rather, it was used more as a tool in crisis management. I am however heartened by the present impetus and would like to avail ourselves of this opportunity to commend the role of the Secretary-General, those of his Special Representatives, crisis management operations and missions around the world, as well as the increasing role of the AU, sub-regional organizations and that of the International Contact Groups (ICGs) in tackling crisis situations that have emerged globally in recent times.

Sierra Leone will continue to wholeheartedly embrace mediation and other conflict prevention initiatives as a key and indispensable tool in settling disputes, preventing and resolving conflicts. The lessons we learnt from our experience have enhanced our conviction in the core principles of democracy, human rights and good governance as a prerequisite for political stability, sustainable peace, security and development. We therefore remain strongly committed to the rule of law, respect for and protection of human rights, gender equality and the empowerment of our women, equal access to justice, fighting corruption with zero tolerance, the pursuit of the internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals, ensuring participatory governance, conducting free, fair, transparent and credible elections, as well as combating transnational organized crime in all its forms.

Sierra Leone thus views with disappointment, the conclusion of the Conference on the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT) without a negotiated consensus for its adoption. The Sierra Leone delegation believes that we must all earnestly endeavour to adopt a well considered and balanced treaty with adequate provisions to effectively regulate the transfer of conventional weapons. If we continue to delay in this respect, we face the risk of their continuous use in committing grave violations of national and international law, which has the potential to destabilize peace and security. We therefore urge member states to consider our moral obligation to humanity as our key guiding principle, and sincerely commit ourselves to, contributing to the establishment of mechanisms to prevent the diversion of such weapons into the illicit market.

Mr. President,

Three years down the line, we will reach the 2015 target date for the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals (MDG's). For many member states, particularly those of the global south, the voyage has been bumpy and sometimes turbulent. Worse still, the effects of the food, fuel and financial crises that struck the global community in 2008, including those of climate change, conflicts and deadly pandemics, further exacerbated the situation and compromised the determination and efforts of the developing countries, especially the Least Developed Countries, to attain internationally agreed development goals, including the MDGs. We commend Brazil for successfully hosting the Rio+20 Conference on Sustainable Development, and equally applaud our solidarity and flexibility during the negotiation process to incorporate the LDCs and conflict affected countries in the Rio+20 outcome document. We look forward to a similar spirit of solidarity in coming up with sustainable development goals that take on board concerns of the most vulnerable members of the community of nations.

Mr. President, Distinguished delegates,

Despite the onerous challenges facing the global community, Sierra Leone has recorded significant progress in strengthening its political and economic governance, including improvement in social indicators. We have made substantial progress in the implementation of the President's "Agenda for Change (2008-2012)", which covers the priorities of our national development aspirations as well as the key peacebuilding priorities aligned with the United Nations Joint Vision for Sierra Leone. The on-going foreign direct investment in various sectors of the economy, notably the mining sector, is brightening the prospect of the economy and hopefully placing Sierra Leone among the fastest growing economies in the world in the next few years.

The "Agenda for Change" continues to provide a strong partnership link between Sierra Leone and the UN, including other international development partners. Its implementation has so far had a great impact on peacebuilding and laying the foundation of opening the path to sustainable development and peace consolidation. Sierra Leone today is considered a showpiece of best practice in donor coordination as well as a success story in peacebuilding. In that regard, we reiterate our call on the international community to continue to invest in success in the spirit of the "New Deal" done in Busan on engagement with fragile states and the need for special attention to be paid to countries emerging from conflict. The successor development framework to our Agenda for Change which is anchored on the "New Deal" entitled: "Agenda for Prosperity" is well underway.

In its short existence, the peacebuilding architecture has proven its worth as envisaged by the leaders at the 2005 World Summit whose goal was to help countries emerging from conflict make an irreversible transition from war to sustainable peace. As one of the first countries on the PBC's agenda, Sierra Leone has charted a path for others to learn from. In that regard, we strongly believe that strengthening peacebuilding will better safeguard countries from relapsing into conflict, and sustain peace beyond the life of peacekeeping missions. It will also help ensure that the enormous investments that member states make in peacekeeping operations will achieve their intended result.

Mr. President,

Sierra Leone continues to uphold the principles of inter-religious tolerance and peaceful co-existence as well as the respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. At the national level, we have enhanced political stability by strengthening good governance institutions, giving them sufficient leverage and latitude to deliver on their respective statutory mandates. This arrangement has earned the Human Rights Commission of Sierra Leone (HRCSL) an 'A status' accreditation with the ICC of National Human Rights Institutions. In this regard, we remain focused on our reporting obligations to international treaty bodies and we have thus submitted our initial report on the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), while work is well underway on our reports in compliance with the Convention Against Torture and the African Charter on Human and Peoples Rights.

In the same direction, we have recently established a National Commission for Disabled Persons, in line with the relevant provision of the Disability Act 2011, enacted the Sexual Offences Act 2012 to address the specific issue of sexual violence against our women and girls and passed into law the Arms and Ammunition Bill 2012 to regulate gun ownership that ensures compliance with relevant ECOWAS Conventions on Small Arms and Light Weapons. A Gender Equality Bill is also undergoing due process for enactment.

I commend the support of the United Nations and international partners to the work of the Special Court for Sierra Leone through which it has made a number of critical contributions to the

advancement of the rule of law at both the national and international levels. In particular, we hail the Special Court for bringing perpetrators of crimes against humanity and violations of international humanitarian law committed in Sierra Leone during the course of our eleven year conflict. Sierra Leone, the United Nations and the international community can be proud of the Special Court's immense achievements. With our continued support, the Special Court can complete its remaining work.

Mr. President,

In his address to this august body during the 66th session, H. E. President Dr. Ernest Bai Koroma underscored the imperative of **peaceful settlement of disputes** in Africa and the world at large by emphasizing that 'the world is so interconnected in trade, politics and social spheres that a single nation's upheaval could affect many other countries'. It is against this background that we, as a country, have continued to nurture closer ties with sister states within the Mano River Basin to deepen cooperation and collaboration in order to address issues of common concern ranging from transnational organised crime to border disputes. The recent decision by the Presidents of Sierra Leone and the Sister Republic of Guinea to demilitarize the Yenga border area and to establish a Joint Committee of the two countries to ensure a final peaceful resolution of the dispute over Yenga is consistent with our commitment to a peaceful resolution of international disputes. Indeed, our steadfast commitment to global peace and security is evident in our participation in United Nations Peacekeeping Missions in Lebanon, Somalia, The Sudan, South Sudan and Timor-Leste.

Mr. President,

The 2012 Presidential, Parliamentary and Local Council Elections scheduled to take place on 17 November, 2012 are barely forty-six (46) days away. With the support of our bilateral and multilateral partners, preparations are in full gear for the conduct of the third of such elections within a decade following the end of our civil conflict. Government is fully aware that the conduct and outcome of these elections will be a critical benchmark for assessing the level of our gains in the area of peace consolidation and democracy. The Government, relevant stakeholders and our development partners are therefore expressly determined to exert collective effort and use every available opportunity to ensure that we put solid mechanisms in place for the peaceful conduct and achievement of transparent and credible democratic elections.

It is in this regard that in May this year, all key stakeholders in the country committed themselves to a credible and violence free process by signing the 'Declaration on the 2012 elections'. We have thus consolidated the electoral laws and established electoral offences courts to ensure the legitimacy and credibility of the electoral process.

Mr. President,

As Coordinator of the African Union Committee of Ten on the United Nations Reforms, I am pleased to report to this Assembly that at the last AU Summit held in Addis Ababa, African Heads of State reaffirmed their strong commitment to the Ezulwini Consensus and Sirte Declaration containing the African common position on the reform of the United Nations Security Council. To that end, we are committed to building alliances in support of the African common position with diverse interest groups and member states engaged in the Intergovernmental Negotiations with the view of achieving an early reform of the Security Council. In that pursuit, member states of the African Union were

called upon to include the issue of the Reform of the Security Council among the priorities of their foreign policies.

In that regard, Africa continues to engage in the Intergovernmental Negotiations with an open door policy aimed at correcting the historical injustice suffered by the continent in being the only continent not represented in the Permanent category of the Council and at the same time under-represented in the Non-permanent category. Since the Security Council remains to be at the centre of global governance in maintaining international peace and Security, and cognizance of the World Summit's Outcome on the need to enhance Council's representativity, accountability, effectiveness and legitimacy of its decisions, as well as the democratization of its decision-making process, correcting the lingering historical injustice done to the continent becomes imperative and compelling.

In that regard, we urge the wider United Nations membership to work with Africa to urgently address this injustice. Africa is not asking for too much, and we all know that procrastinating in this matter is a travesty of justice and fair play which undermines the dignity of our people.

Mr. President,

We are determined, at the national level, to surmount all impediments on our way to development and to fully deliver on all the projects in our “Agenda for Change”. We are confident that with sustained support from our bilateral and multilateral partners, we shall promote socio-economic progress and provide better standard of living for our people in an atmosphere of peace and security. What we cannot afford at this time in our history is to fail in our duty and obligation to provide peace, security and sustainable development for our people.

At the global level, **Distinguished Delegates**, as we look at the work that lies ahead of the 67th session, let us not lose sight of our shared obligation in ensuring a peaceful and secured world by resolving our differences through constructive dialogue and, thus strengthen the existing mediation mechanisms provided in the Charter and institutionalized within the United Nations system.

I thank you all for your attention