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Request for the inclusion of a supplementary item in the agenda of the seventy-sixth session

International cooperation on access to justice for survivors of sexual violence

Letter dated 15 July 2021 from the Permanent Representative of Sierra Leone to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to request, on behalf of the Government of Sierra Leone and in accordance with the rules of procedure of the General Assembly, the inclusion of a supplementary item entitled “International cooperation on access to justice for survivors of sexual violence” in the agenda of the seventy-sixth session of the General Assembly.

I have the further honour to request, in accordance with the rules of procedure of the General Assembly, the referral of the supplementary item to the plenary of the Assembly.

In accordance with the rules of procedure of the General Assembly, an explanatory memorandum concerning my Government’s request is attached hereto (see annex).

I have the honour to request that the present letter and its annex be circulated as a document of the General Assembly.

(Signed) Alie **Kabba**
Ambassador and Permanent Representative
Permanent Mission of Sierra Leone to the United Nations



Annex

Explanatory memorandum

1. Sexual violence is a universal issue that demands international recognition. According to the World Health Organization, 35 per cent of women worldwide – 1.3 billion people – are sexual violence survivors, yet, the General Assembly has never adopted a resolution focused solely on those survivors' rights. Around the world, people are demanding recognition and justice for survivors, who are denied basic rights and access to information and justice. Justice should not depend on geography. Basic protection against sexual assault and access to justice should be available to everyone, no matter their gender, age, nationality or citizenship.
2. A stand-alone United Nations resolution on sexual violence has been called for, for years, by survivors from all regions. Over the past three years in particular, owing to the global Me Too movement, sexual violence has been a public issue on the global stage – and yet there exists a leadership vacuum on this issue, especially at the United Nations.
3. Sexual violence must be its own issue, yet the United Nations currently treats it as a sub-issue. The crime of sexual violence is a global issue, affecting the survival, livelihood and dignity of more than 1.3 billion people across all countries and all genders. Victims deserve the restoration of their rights and dignity, as well as relief measures. The United Nations is failing survivors of sexual violence.
4. While the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict has made many efforts, the United Nations can better address the issue by creating a nexus between survivors of sexual violence in conflict and in peacetime.
5. Similar to the movements to combat trafficking in persons and, more relatedly, gender-based violence issues, including female genital mutilation, domestic violence and sexual harassment, a stand-alone United Nations agenda item on access to justice for survivors of sexual violence can catalyse Member States' efforts to strengthen their national capacity, including the judicial system and legal framework, to protect and support survivors within their borders.
6. The Government of Sierra Leone requests the General Assembly to consider establishing a separate agenda item on sexual violence. Doing so will recognize the gravity of the crime, specifically call out the crime as abhorrent and uplift its victims as deserving of dignity and justice. There exists previous language on sexual violence that has been agreed upon by the full United Nations membership. Through a unique Assembly agenda item, Member States can be continually reminded of the need to make further efforts to improve survivors' rights.