



Security Council

Sixty-sixth year

Provisional

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Monday, 12 September 2011, 10 a.m.

New York

<i>President:</i>	Mr. Salam	(Lebanon)
<i>Members:</i>	Bosnia and Herzegovina	Mr. Barbalić
	Brazil	Mrs. Dunlop
	China	Mr. Tian Lin
	Colombia	Mr. Osorio
	France	Mr. Bonne
	Gabon	Mr. Onanga Ndiaye
	Germany	Mr. Wittig
	India	Mr. Kumar
	Nigeria	Mr. Amieyeofori
	Portugal	Mr. Cabral
	Russian Federation	Mr. Zhukov
	South Africa	Mr. Laher
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Mr. Tatham
	United States of America	Mr. DeLaurentis

Agenda

The situation in Sierra Leone

Seventh report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Integrated Peacebuilding Office in Sierra Leone (S/2011/554)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.15 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation in Sierra Leone

Seventh report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Integrated Peacebuilding Office in Sierra Leone (S/2011/554)

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): Under rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the representative of Sierra Leone to participate in this meeting.

On behalf of the Council, I welcome His Excellency Mr. Joseph Dauda, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Sierra Leone.

Under rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite Mr. Michael von der Schulenburg, Executive Representative of the Secretary-General and head of the United Nations Integrated Peacebuilding Office in Sierra Leone, to participate in this meeting.

Under rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite His Excellency Mr. Guillermo Rishchynski, Chairperson of the Sierra Leone country-specific configuration of the Peacebuilding Commission and Permanent Representative of Canada, to participate in this meeting.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

I wish to draw the attention of Council members to document S/2011/554, which contains the seventh report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Integrated Peacebuilding Office in Sierra Leone.

I now give the floor to Mr. Michael von der Schulenburg.

Mr. Von der Schulenburg: Thank you, Mr. President, for this opportunity to introduce the seventh report of the Secretary-General on Sierra Leone (S/2011/554) since the establishment of an integrated United Nations peacebuilding mission in 2008.

As the country celebrated the fiftieth anniversary of its independence last April, Sierra Leone continued its progress towards developing into a stable, peaceful

and economically more viable democracy. I feel that this is the occasion, especially here in the Security Council, to commend the people of Sierra Leone for what has been achieved during the past nine years in consolidating peace and building a stable, democratic society. These are achievements made not only by two peacetime democratically elected presidents and successive democratically elected Governments, but also by political party leaders, independent commissioners, local district officials, civil society, traditional and religious leaders, professionals, journalists and artists, tradesmen, doctors and nurses, teachers and police officers — in short, by many ordinary Sierra Leonean men and women.

However, the recent clashes and skirmishes that occurred not only between followers of the two main political parties but also among followers of different groups within the same political party remind us that there is still considerable potential for conflict and violence. Particularly serious was the attack that took place three days ago on the presidential candidate of the main opposition and the subsequent rampage that left him with head injuries and also left one person dead, scores injured and a number of properties belonging to followers of the governing party devastated.

It is not yet clear who was responsible for the attack, and we must not jump to quick conclusions; the President has acted immediately by setting up a public investigation, and the police has stepped up security for the opposition leader. However, this brings into the open the fact that there remains a persistent social undercurrent that can turn into violence if provoked, despite all the progress that has been made.

I therefore call on all Sierra Leonean politicians not to forget what they have achieved, to continue building on those achievements and to act responsibly. Elections are still one and a half years away, and this must not start to embitter the social and political climate in Sierra Leone.

I believe that the recent incidents do not reflect the real nature of ordinary, peace-loving Sierra Leoneans. In fact, the recently held national delegates' conference of the Sierra Leone People's Party (SLPP), the country's main political opposition, is probably a good example of political maturity and showed how the Government, the governing party and the main

opposition party can work together in settling controversial issues and in making democracy work.

At the conference, the SLPP elected a new party chairman and its party executive. But, more importantly, the SLPP also elected its presidential candidate, Mr. Julius Maada Bio, who had once been a senior member and later Head of State of a former military Government, the National Provisional Revolutionary Council. Mr. Maada Bio will now be the main contestant to face President Ernest Bai Koroma for the presidency in the 2012 elections.

The SLPP conference was remarkable for the fact that it was conducted in such a peaceful and democratic atmosphere. Although the conference took place in Freetown, a stronghold of the governing party, the All Peoples Congress (APC), there were no provocations or incidents whatsoever. Quite to the contrary, the APC leadership had called on its followers in Freetown not to wear the party colours and to stay away from the location of the conference. As a precaution, the APC party headquarters, which is located just across the SLPP conference hall, was also closed. Police protection for the conference was professional. In fact, prior to the conference, the President had met with the then interim leader of the SLPP — the opposition party — to ensure personally that the Conference would take place without any violence or outside interference.

The media coverage of the SLPP conference was generally lauded as having been fair, balanced and informative. This was a major test for the Sierra Leone Broadcasting Corporation, which was newly created following the agreed closing of all political party and government controlled radio stations after the 2009 political disturbances.

The SLPP conference was a further positive example of intra-party democracy. Prior to the conference, the SLPP had faced a major legal challenge in the Supreme Court from one of its followers. After initial hesitations, the party chose to solve this challenge within the law and its own party constitution by holding new elections for its party delegates.

At the conference, a total of 19 aspirants had tried to obtain the SLPP's endorsement as its presidential candidate for the 2012 elections. In the run-up to the party conference, this had caused considerable intra-party controversies that at times spilled over into violent clashes between the supporters of leading

aspirants. However, at the conference all these differences were managed and respective aspirants made sure that their supporters did not disrupt the democratic intra-party election process. In the end, all aspirants considered the intra-party elections to be free, fair and acceptable.

However, the re-election of the party Chairman and the election of the presidential candidate of the SLPP have raised concerns, as both elected party leaders played prominent roles in previous military regimes. I trust that both recognize the need to dispel such concerns. I therefore welcome Mr. Maada Bio's recent public statement expressing his regrets and issuing an apology for the wrongs that were committed during the rule of a military Government in which he held high office.

We all must not forget that military coups and the horrors of the civil war are part of a very recent history in Sierra Leone. It is therefore inevitable, and even necessary and welcome, that some of those who have been involved in previously undemocratic Governments are now taking part in today's democratic political life. Against this background, it is important that all political leaders with links to past regimes, irrespective of their present political party affiliations, make it clear that the right lessons have been learned from the country's violent past. In this context, I applaud the clear and unambiguous words spoken by President Koroma in his fiftieth anniversary speech that Sierra Leone has learned a bitter lesson and will not repeat past mistakes. I feel that these words could guide the political discourse in the country.

The 2012 elections must not become hostage to the past. Instead, we all have the responsibility to give Sierra Leoneans in 2012 the possibility of looking forward, of deciding on the future direction of their country, and of selecting their future leaders accordingly. All political parties, and above all the two main political parties that have helped shape post-conflict Sierra Leone and that were instrumental in building today's democratic society, must share a common interest in protecting these national achievements in 2012 and beyond.

I also hope that, in the same spirit, the outstanding issues for the 2012 elections can be solved among political parties. These include reaching agreements on the legal framework for the next elections, on a new code of conduct that will govern

election campaigning, and on building trust in existing national electoral management bodies. I therefore look in particular to the very able and trusted new Chairman of the Political Parties Registration Commission to take a lead in holding these crucial multi-party consultations.

In his speech at the fiftieth independence anniversary, President Koroma launched the idea of an all-inclusive and non-partisan national conference to discuss in a public debate the future direction of Sierra Leone. I very much welcome such a proposal, as such a conference would be held at a time when Sierra Leone's post-conflict reconstruction era is coming to an end and the country is heading towards a new era of economic and social development. This would allow not only experts but above all ordinary Sierra Leoneans throughout the country to be consulted at a time of profound economic and social changes in the country.

Such a national debate could be an opportunity for all political parties to listen to the problems and aspirations of ordinary Sierra Leoneans before launching themselves into the 2012 election campaign. It could be an exercise of consultative democracy that could help prevent problems in the future. Careful consultations and preparations would be needed if such a Conference is to be all-inclusive. I believe that it is a sign of constructive political leadership that the presidential candidate of the opposition party has also indicated his willingness to participate in such a national debate.

Let me finally turn to some economic and social issues. The Government has been successful in expanding the national, inner-city and rural feeder road networks, in bringing electricity to a wider range of the population, and in reviving agricultural production. It has pursued a policy of privatization that includes the Freetown seaport and national communication systems, and it is mobilizing international private investments, especially in extractive industries and agri-businesses. The new iron ore projects are likely to start exporting this year, and this could lead to a significant increase in economic growth and revenue collection, with some projections showing a possible threefold increase in domestic revenues by 2015. Sierra Leone's financial fortunes could therefore change dramatically within a relatively short time frame.

This will open up much-needed resources to address the significant deficits in human development

and infrastructure availability. However, it also raises challenges of the transparency and proper management of those new resources for the benefit of all Sierra Leoneans, while maintaining macroeconomic stability. I welcome the generous international assistance to Sierra Leone aimed at helping avoid the so-called resource curse that has affected so many other resource-rich countries.

The Achilles heel of Sierra Leone's future development will remain persistent poverty, youth unemployment and problems in delivering social services. Although Sierra Leone continues to enjoy relatively high economic growth rates, it remains one of the poorest counties in the world. In particular, persistently high inflation rates for basic commodities have eroded the purchasing power of low, fixed-income earners such as public servants, teachers, police officers and nurses, as well as ordinary, occasional labourers. This appears to affect more city dwellers and many of the young people who have gone to the cities in search for a better life. As we have seen in other countries, such a decline in living conditions could turn easily into social unrest, and it may therefore be time for a more comprehensive review of the impact of all development programmes on poverty reduction, irrespective of who finances them.

Much has been achieved in improving social services in recent years; the free health care programme that the President launched last year is a good example. Not surprisingly, however, there remain persistent problems of delivering such services to reach the target population. Corruption, bureaucracy, low capacity and the lack of technical and logistical facilities are probably at the core of such problems. Here, there is also a need for the comprehensive development of the safety nets in the country to protect the poor from any global shocks. Also here, I feel that such problems require greater Government-development partner cooperation, with more attention paid to making the public sector more effective and efficient.

A thorny issue remains the high unemployment rates among Sierra Leone's youth — a difficult problem not only for countries across Africa, but also, as we know, in the developed world. Notwithstanding the creation of the National Youth Commission and the concerted efforts of development partners, no substantive success has been achieved in fighting Sierra Leone's rampant youth unemployment. High

population increases and increased migration to the cities may even have made the problem worse. In the short term, better coordination within the Government will be needed so that the youth are better targeted to benefit from specific programmes. It would also require better cooperation among the Government, development partners and the private sector.

At the end, I would like to recognize the enormous contribution that Ambassador McNee has made to peacebuilding in Sierra Leone. As the Chair of the country-specific configuration of the Peacebuilding Commission for Sierra Leone for almost three years, he visited the country repeatedly and reached out not only to the Government and the political opposition, but also to the wider Sierra Leonean society. For me personally, he has been a great support and a reliable partner in New York in discussing various policy issues that helped shape the peacebuilding agenda not only for Sierra Leone, but for the United Nations in general. I would like to thank him profoundly, and wish him all the best for the future.

I would also like to take this opportunity to welcome Ambassador Rishchynski, and I look forward to working with him very closely also in the future — we have had just one meeting. I think that there is much to be done for Sierra Leone, and also for peacebuilding, where we can work together.

I would also like to thank the Government of Sierra Leone and the leaders — religious as well as traditional — of the political parties, independent commissions, local Governments, civil society, non-governmental organizations and the media for their continued trust in the work of the United Nations. However, I would like especially to thank President Koroma for his leadership, his exceptional openness and his welcoming of the United Nations family.

Finally, I would like to thank Sierra Leone's Foreign Minister, His Excellency Mr. Joseph B. Dauda, for having come all the way to New York to represent his country. He is probably one of the best witnesses among us all of the achievements made in Sierra Leone, as he has played a prominent role in successive Governments. It is a pleasure working with him.

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): I thank Mr. Von der Schulenburg for his briefing.

I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Guillermo Rishchynski.

Mr. Rishchynski (*spoke in French*): As the new Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Canada, it is an immense honour and pleasure for me to be here this morning, and I thank you, Mr. President, for the opportunity to take the floor.

(*spoke in English*)

I am pleased to address the Council on behalf of the Sierra Leone country-specific configuration of the Peacebuilding Commission.

A decade following the civil war, Sierra Leone is poised to shift its national strategic focus from peacebuilding to economic development. As both the Executive Representative of the Secretary-General and my predecessor have previously noted, that represents a remarkable success story for post-conflict recovery. Yet, it is not quite finished. Sierra Leone will require continued support as it prepares for elections next year, strives to address the enduring challenges in the areas of good governance, youth employment and combating drug trafficking, and builds resilience to weather unexpected political and economic shocks.

Drawing upon the findings of a delegation visit to Freetown earlier this year, I would like to highlight issues of particular importance and outline the Peacebuilding Commission's plans for the coming six months.

As the Executive Representative noted, the presidential, legislative and local elections in 2012 have great symbolic importance. A campaign free of intimidation, conducted in a spirit of open dialogue and accepted by all, will signal that Sierra Leone has built a stable and democratic foundation upon which to build a sustainable peace. As the elections approach, it is essential that all actors involved build greater trust and generate a common understanding of the ground rules with respect to reforming the electoral laws and making further progress on implementing the agreements reached in the joint communiqué of April 2009. As the Security Council considers the mandate of the United Nations Integrated Peacebuilding Office in Sierra Leone (UNIPSIL), I would like to emphasize the central role that the mission has played in facilitating dialogue and assisting electoral preparations, as well as to commend Mr. Von der Schulenburg for his personal leadership.

In that respect, the appointment of the Sierra Leone People's Party presidential candidate opens the

door for the main political parties to engage in a more open, regular and productive high-level dialogue. The National Electoral Commission must deliver not just a technically sound election, but also one that is widely accepted by all participants. The Political Parties Registration Commission will continue to be an important forum for resolving potential disputes. It is critical that the relationship between those bodies and the major political parties improve. The Sierra Leone Police has served as a neutral and effective force for stability in the recent past, but continues to face serious equipment shortages. The current limited supply of police vehicles poses a serious transportation constraint and could hamper response times to remote areas during the election period. I would urge all donors to help fill that capacity gap.

Looking beyond the electoral period, lasting solutions to many of Sierra Leone's challenges will depend on increasing private sector investment. Good governance is essential for spurring such progress. The Anti-Corruption Commission continues to advance an ambitious agenda that includes the prosecution of egregious offenders, public outreach and regular institutional reviews. Such efforts have yielded steady progress in the World Bank's ease of doing business rankings. They must continue and accelerate.

Sierra Leone is also experiencing a surge of investment in the extractive sector. That holds promise for generating growth and reducing dependency on aid, but it also brings associated risks. Resources must be managed in a transparent manner that delivers benefits to the population as a whole. Sierra Leone can build on its efforts to mitigate such risks through its participation in the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative and the Kimberley Process.

Economic growth represents an essential component in the long-term resolution of Sierra Leone's high levels of youth unemployment, but the country has taken sensible steps in the short term. Since the previous delegation visit in 2010, which focused closely on the issue, the Government has established a National Youth Commission, appointed a new Youth Commissioner, restructured relevant responsibilities to create a Ministry of Youth and Sports, and revised its national strategy to better match supply-side interventions to actual market demand. Those are most welcome developments.

As the *2011 World Development Report* argues, creating jobs is a core component of peace consolidation, but it often receives too little attention. By providing additional support to Sierra Leone, international partners could seize the opportunity to begin implementing the recommendations of the *World Development Report* and to invest in Sierra Leone's long-term success.

Sierra Leone continues to face the unwelcome threat posed by drug trafficking and organized crime. Recognizing the regional nature of the problem, the West African configurations of the Peacebuilding Commission held a joint meeting earlier this year, with the high-level participation of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, the United Nations Office for West Africa, the Department of Peacekeeping Operations and INTERPOL. The discussion yielded several relevant findings.

First, while Sierra Leone is the most advanced member of the West Africa Coast Initiative, the slow pace of progress elsewhere hinders intelligence-sharing and early warning. The limited capacity within the region to track financial flows is another significant challenge, especially given the risk that illicit profits may aggravate corruption. Secondly, the West Africa Coast Initiative requires additional funding to meet the scale of outstanding needs.

Allow me to close by briefly outlining the Peacebuilding Commission's forthcoming activities. In October, the Sierra Leone configuration will meet to consider the second annual joint progress report on the Agenda for Change, prepared by the Government of Sierra Leone in collaboration with the United Nations, international partners and civil society, including women's groups. Over the course of the next six months, I also plan to visit Sierra Leone and will convene a meeting to assess preparations for the 2012 elections, featuring the participation of relevant Sierra Leonean officials. I will convey the findings of that visit and the conclusions of the Peacebuilding Commission's deliberations to the Security Council in due course.

Finally, let me express my gratitude to both the Government of Sierra Leone and UNIPSIL. Sierra Leone has demonstrated what strong national leadership can achieve in the face of adversity. UNIPSIL, ably led by Executive Representative of the Secretary-General Michael von der Schulenburg, in

conjunction with the entire United Nations country team, has developed an innovative and integrated approach to peacebuilding that is yielding impressive results. It is a privilege to work with such strong partners. The Peacebuilding Commission stands ready to continue to assist Sierra Leone's efforts to consolidate peace.

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): I thank Mr. Rishchynski for his briefing.

I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Joseph Bandabla Dauda, Minister for Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of Sierra Leone.

Mr. Dauda (Sierra Leone): At the outset, I join previous speakers in congratulating you, Mr. President, for assuming the presidency of the Security Council for the month of September. At the same time, I would like to thank the members of the Council for giving me the opportunity to participate in the discussion of the agenda item under the Council's consideration, namely, the United Nations Integrated Peacebuilding Office in Sierra Leone (UNIPSIL).

On behalf of His Excellency President Ernest Bai Koroma and the people of Sierra Leone, I wish to convey our profound appreciation for the unremitting support and active interest by the United Nations and friends of Sierra Leone to consolidate our peace, stability and development. In that regard, permit me to single out the strong leadership and commitment in the pursuit of peace and development in Sierra Leone displayed by Ambassador John McNee as Chair of the Sierra Leone configuration, and to express our sincere gratitude personally to him, his Mission staff and the Government and the people of Canada for the exemplary and record-setting role they have played, which is worthy of emulation and recognition. We wish Mr. McNee well in his future assignments.

We look forward to continuing to work with Canada in consolidating the gains made in the transition from the post-conflict phase to a more development-focused phase. We welcome Ambassador McNee's successor, Ambassador Guillermo Rishchynski, with open arms and high expectations and greet him today with a very warm embrace. We thank him for his instructive participation in this debate.

Our thanks also go to the Executive Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Michael von der Schulenburg, for his remarkable show of

understanding of the situation on the ground, as well as to the United Nations country team for its strong support in helping to consolidate peace and in maximizing the gains of our post-conflict development effort. I acknowledge the kind sentiments that Mr. Von der Schulenburg expressed in my regard in his statement. I would like to assure him of my continued cooperation and support in the efforts to consolidate our peace process.

The Secretary-General's seventh report on the United Nations Integrated Peacebuilding Office in Sierra Leone (S/2011/554) accurately catalogues the progress made and the challenges that remain in our efforts to consolidate peace and transition towards a more developmental phase. President Ernest Bai Koroma and the Government of Sierra Leone remain firmly committed to the vision of our international partners, including the United Nations and the Peacebuilding Commission, for ensuring durable peace and stability and in fostering socio-economic development as mapped out in our Agenda for Change. It is within that context that President Koroma launched the idea of an all-inclusive and non-partisan national conference during his speech celebrating the fiftieth anniversary of our independence.

The concern for the implementation of the joint communiqué of 2 April 2009, alluded to in the report, is well noted. We would like to assure the Council that the Government of Sierra Leone will continue to engage with all stakeholders, as was demonstrated in working with UNIPSIL to establish the All Political Parties Youth Association and the All Political Parties Women's Association, both of which aim at preventing political violence, fostering inter-party dialogue and, in the case of the Women's Association, further enhancing women's participation in politics.

In the latter regard, I am happy to share with the Council that we now have 14.5 per cent of women holding political office, almost half of our target of 30 per cent. We also continue to make progress towards the education of the girl child and towards providing free health care to pregnant women, lactating mothers and children under five years old.

We are also making steady progress in putting structures in place to address youth unemployment, corruption, transnational organized crime, the participation of women in peacebuilding and public service, and gender-based violence. In response to

youth unemployment, which remains a significant challenge to the peace consolidation process, a new Ministry of Youth Employment and Sports has been established, along with a National Youth Commission — whose commissioner and board members have been appointed — to provide the policy framework. These measures will pave the way for the meaningful participation of youth in national development.

The Government of Sierra Leone remains committed to the conduct of peaceful, free, fair, credible and transparent elections in 2012. We welcome all the support of the United Nations and our development partners to that end. President Koroma's commitment to a peaceful political environment was recently demonstrated by ensuring that there was an atmosphere conducive to the main opposition party, the Sierra Leone People's Party, being able to select its party officials, including its presidential candidate for the 2012 elections. Indeed, a successful outcome of those elections will be a highly acclaimed benchmark and indicator of whether meaningful peace and stability has really taken firm root in our national efforts, as will the realization of the much talked-about idea of a transition process or a phasing out of UNIPSIL into a United Nations country team.

The National Electoral Commission and the Political Parties Registration Commission enjoy the independence necessary to deliver effectively on their constitutional mandate free of interference. Efforts are also being made by the Electoral Commission, in consultation with all stakeholders, including political parties, to consider the reform of the electoral process. The Sierra Leone Broadcasting Corporation, the Independent Media Commission and the Editors Guild continue to play a central role in providing equal access to radio and television air time to the public, and to political parties in particular.

We are equally committed to responding to concerns raised in the report on the mining sector and the management of our natural resources by taking measures to improve the governance of the sector and ensuring greater transparency and accountability in order to maximize the value derived from the country's mineral resources for the benefit of all Sierra Leoneans. To that end, we have sought support from our development partners in order to build the capacity of the Ministry of Mines and Mineral Resources.

However, continued support from the international community and our development partners is still required to build on the gains made to further consolidate peacebuilding in Sierra Leone. In particular, such issues as support for the National Electoral Commission, addressing youth unemployment, support for the Anti-Corruption Commission, the reparations process as recommended by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, and the provision of vehicles to the Sierra Leone Police to enhance their capability and make them more mobile and visible during the elections and after, are issues that require urgent attention and solutions in order to consolidate the gains already made.

The successful conduct of peaceful, free and fair elections largely requires all stakeholders to be responsible and adhere to the electoral laws and other relevant national legislation. In particular, there is a need for all stakeholders, including international players, to be biased in favour of consolidating peace and stability in Sierra Leone and not to be seen to be supportive of perpetrators of gross human rights abuses and violations. At this stage of the peacebuilding process, such conduct could tend to be misunderstood and incite violence, which could then lead to a relapse into conflict.

Furthermore, drug trafficking and organized crime continue to pose a serious challenge to the Economic Community of West African States subregion. With support from the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, Sierra Leone, within the framework of the West Africa Coast Initiative, has gone far ahead of other affected countries in putting in place the structures for the Transnational Organized Crime Unit to be functional and effective. Additional assistance to the Government in promoting good governance and the rule of law; combating illicit drug trafficking and organized crime; providing support to the Human Rights Commission; and assisting in strengthening national capacity-building in the areas of law enforcement, forensics, border management, money laundering and the strengthening of criminal justice institutions is also required to consolidate and build on the gains made in those key peacebuilding areas.

On the socio-economic front, the prevailing global economic and financial uncertainties, as well as debt crises, are seriously undermining our efforts to turn the economy around as quickly as desired. In view

of the severe impact of those uncertainties on our efforts, and in support of the strides we have made in socio-economic development, we look forward to the adoption of effective ways and means by which the international community and development partners could respond to the needs of the funding gap in the implementation of the United Nations Joint Vision for Sierra Leone. We appreciate the positive response by some of our development partners and friendly countries, including the United Kingdom, Canada, Australia, Ireland and Italy, in terms of their contribution to the Multi-Donor Trust Fund. We appeal for appropriate steps to be taken towards fulfilling commitments with regard to the pledges made at the Consultative Group meeting on Sierra Leone held in London in 2009.

We are fully aware that attracting foreign direct investment and establishing a conducive and purposeful business environment remain key in establishing a more secure Sierra Leone and in protecting its citizens from fear and want. The Government will relentlessly continue to pursue that objective.

While we share the accolades for the progress made, it is important to gently urge our friends, the international community and the United Nations to continue investing in success as we relentlessly work towards achieving our shared objectives in peace consolidation and development.

I would like to draw the Council's attention to the increase in mercenary activities in the Mano River Basin, which require our collective effort and support so as to address the issue before it eventually gets out of hand and undermines peace and stability in the subregion. We welcome United Nations support to the trial of Charles Taylor by the Special Court for Sierra Leone.

Before concluding my statement, I would like, with the leave of the Council, to provide a briefing on recent developments in terms of political violence in Sierra Leone. The flag-bearer of the Sierra Leone People's Party (SLPP) for the 2012 presidential elections, Mr. Jurius Maada Bio, scheduled a national thank-you tour to personally express his gratitude to SLPP members for having elected him as the presidential candidate of their party. The party secretariat is said to have duly requested the necessary police clearance, which was granted by right, with the

understanding that Mr. Maada Bio was to deliver his thank-you message to his audience at the Bo Coronation Field.

Mr. Maada Bio left Freetown on Friday, 9 September, made stopovers at Mile 91 and Moyamba Junction and arrived in Bo without any incident. He was welcomed by huge and jubilant crowds at all points. On his way to the Coronation Field, the convoy was routed along Mahei Boima Road, where the party offices of the All People's Congress (APC) and the People's Movement for Democratic Change (PMDC) are located.

It is reported that, between the offices of the PMDC and the APC, there was an incident of stone-throwing, to which Mr. Maada Bio, who is said to have been riding in an open-top vehicle and in a standing position, fell victim with an injury to his head. It is further reported that he was then rushed to a hospital for medical attention. With that, violence immediately erupted at the scene of the incident, which led to the burning of the APC office building. An additional two buildings at two different locations were also burned down, as was the residence of Mr. Sheku Sillah, APC-Bo District Chairman, and a rental building housing the offices of De Pa In Yai.

Journalists are reporting that police efforts to contain the rampage involved the use of tear gas and live bullets, which is said to have resulted in one death, while 17 people were injured and hospitalized. This ugly political incident was starkly condemned in a press release issued immediately after the incident by the Office of President Ernest Bai Koroma, and in many subsequent press releases by other political interest groups, including the APC and the PMDC parties, the Independent Media Commission, the Political Party Registration Commission (PPRC) and the Campaign for Good Governance.

Wide and unequivocal condemnation has also been strongly expressed by the general public through radio phone-in programmes and in print media editorials. The President called a short security meeting on Saturday, which was attended by invited executive representatives of the PPRC, the media and civil society. The meeting was also attended by the Minister of Defence, the Minister for Internal Affairs, the Deputy Minister for Information and Communications, the Chief of Staff, the Chief of Defence Staff, the Sierra Leone Police, the senior cadre of the Office of

National Security, the president of the fire force and the Minister for Foreign Affairs.

In his opening remarks, the President thanked all for responding in such good numbers on very short notice. He firmly reiterated his personal condemnation of the incident, which he said was sending very undesirable and wrong signals ahead of the 2012 elections, and which could potentially negate and derail the national gains made in terms of rebranding the country's image, peacebuilding and peace consolidation, which were so painstakingly achieved with the help of our development partners and the international community.

The President emphatically described the unfortunate incident as ugly and unacceptable, inasmuch as it portends possible violence during the forthcoming 2012 elections. He added that it could undermine the peace, security and stability of the State. President Koroma then categorically stated his personal commitment to nip this inimical tendency in the bud, as he would not allow a recurrence of such apparent re-emergence of political violence, be it inter-or intra-party violence. In the light of what I have described, the President then issued a series of stern directives. He ordered an urgent investigation into the entire political incident of Friday, 9 September and the submission of a comprehensive report as soon as possible. He also ordered that a competent committee be properly and immediately constituted and stressed the need to include members of the PPRC and civil society organizations so as to ensure transparency and the outcome of an objective report that would be credible in the eyes of the nation and the international community.

The President added that he would like to see the investigation conducted in such a professional manner as to leave no room for suspicion by anyone of being unduly disadvantaged. He said that the committee must engage in an extensive fact-finding exercise aimed at producing a comprehensive report that is expected to provide credible evidential basis for the prosecution of

all those found culpable, without exception, prejudice or favour.

The President reaffirmed his determination to ensure that, without exception, anyone found responsible would bear the full penalty of the law. He then implored members of the committee to be constituted to keep in mind that their assignment is a special national call for their patriotic service in a very crucial situation affecting our national development, image and pride. In thanking all of those in attendance, the President said that he expected a speedy and transparent investigation, as well as a very comprehensive and credible report for the sake of easing the anxiety of the nation.

It is to be noted that the investigation will be conducted independently of, but simultaneously with, the Bo police investigation, which may be seen as political in nature.

A similar approach was taken in the case of a recent incident in Kono during a visit by the Minister for Internal Affairs. The committee was scheduled to depart Freetown on Sunday, 11 September. On realizing that Mr. Maada Bio cut short his tour and returned to Freetown over the weekend, the committee membership decided to seek an interview with him before he departed the country for a medical check-up. That is the end of that briefing.

Finally, allow me once again to reaffirm our deep appreciation to the United Nations, the Peacebuilding Commission, its Chair and the members of the Sierra Leone configuration, as well as our development partners, for their continued support to peacebuilding and peace consolidation in Sierra Leone.

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): I thank Mr. Dauda for his statement.

There are no further speakers inscribed on my list. I now invite Council members to informal consultations to continue our discussion of the subject.

The meeting rose at 11 a.m.