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SPEECH BY THE MINISTER OF INTERNAL AFFAIRS, LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF SIERRA LEONE WEST AFRICA DELIVERED AT THE 79TH INTERPOL GENERAL ASSEMBLY DOHA QATA ON MONDAY 8TH NOVEMBER 2010

Mr. Chairman,

Mr. President of the Interpol Khoo Boom Hui

Secretary General Ronald K. Noble,

Executive Committee Members,

Delegates,

Delegations from Member Countries of Interpol,

Colleague Ministers

Representatives of International Organizations

Representatives of our Host Government,

Members of Civil Society Organizations,

Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen.

I bring you greetings from my President, Dr. Ernest Bai Koroma, and people of the Republic of Sierra Leone. They wish the Organization fruitful deliberations that will continue to secure our world.

Mr. Chairman, Ladies and Gentlemen, Sierra Leone is a small country located on the West Africa Coast sharing borders with Guinea on the north and Liberia on the south east and on the west the Atlantic Ocean. It has an area of 27,000 square miles with 5.6 million inhabitants. Sierra Leone was under the British colonial rule until 1961 when she gained her independence. Almost immediately following this, in September 1962 Sierra Leone became a bonafide member of the International Criminal Police Organization (ICPO). Unfortunately Sierra Leone suffered from insurgency and war between 1991 and 2002 but even so, it has remained committed to the aims and objectives of INTERPOL.

I wish to mention with gratitude the support of friendly international partners notably UK/DFID and the Commonwealth, to the Sierra Leone Military and Police by affording our forces reform support ably delivered by International Military Assistant Training Team (IMMAT) and the Commonwealth Police Development Task Force (CWPDTF) respectively.

Mr. Chairman, Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen, the socio economic problems that characterised the war period rendered Sierra Leone incapable of meeting her financial obligations to this august Organization. I am happy to report that in 2003 all our outstanding obligations were fully met and Sierra Leone's status and rights to the Organization was restored.

In 2004, Sierra Leone benefitted from INTERPOL's capacity building support through the provision of a global communication machine – 1-24/7. This has largely enhanced communication and cooperation between the National Central Bureau (NCB) and the general Secretariat. I wish to render our gratitude and appreciation to the Secretariat for this support.

Mr. Chairman, Ladies and Gentlemen, as a post conflict country, the challenges confronting the Government and its development partners are numerous. They include:

- High rate of unemployment.
- Massive reconstruction of infrastructure of roads and bridges that have been damaged by the war.
- Violence and youth militancy.
- Crime management.
- Criminal intelligence analysis.
- Specialist training in human trafficking, drugs trafficking, cyber and high tech crimes.

- Forensic DNA training
- Developing electronic criminal data base
- Expansion of the 1 – 24/7 to other law enforcement agencies in the country.

Mr. Chairman, Ladies and Gentlemen, although efforts have been made towards this direction, as Minister responsible for the Police in my country, I wish to appeal to INTERPOL for more support.

For your information the elections in 2007 which brought the opposition party to power was exclusively policed by our security apparatus. This shows that the Police have developed a capacity to secure major events in the country.

We have been and shall continue to cooperate with other members of INTERPOL regionally and globally in the fight against all forms of Trans-national Crimes to contribute toward making the world a safe and secure place for all of us.

Mr. Chairman, Ladies and Gentlemen as a demonstration of our capacity to collaborate with our partners namely, UNODC, Interpol and other international organization, Sierra Leone has become the Headquarters of the West Africa Coast initiative (WACI) for Liberia, Guinea Bissau and Ivory Coast in an attempt to fight – drugs trafficking in the region.

It is heartening to inform this forum that the Sierra Leone Army and the Police are now taking part in United Nations Peace Keeping Missions in Dafur Sudan, Somalia and Haiti.

On the development front at the November 2009 Consultative Group Conference in London, Sierra Leone stated its priorities as:

- (i) Peace, Security and Good Governance;
- (ii) Macroeconomic Stability;
- (iii) Growing the Private Sector; and
- (iv) Effective Management of Natural Resources,

These priorities were endorsed by our Partners. Considering the remarkable progress that has been made by Sierra Leone in peace building and state building; and taking into consideration its strategic geographical location, Sierra Leone qualifies for increased security support. It is in this vein that I request INTERPOL support to equip Sierra Leone for leadership positioning in crime management and in particular the crime battle in the sub-region.

We have a strong quest and concern to improve on our response time to other members of this Organization. This is particularly so in terms of request for fingerprint classification; passport details, criminal antecedents of suspected persons etc. But we could only be able to do so when there is an established national data base which we do not have at the moment. This makes it difficult for us to retrieve information from other law enforcement bodies in the country. Therefore, we would appreciate it very much if INTERPOL continue to provide us with the expertise and technology as it is obtained in other countries.

Mr. Chairman, I wish all of us successful deliberations.

I thank you all.