



Republic of Sierra Leone

STATEMENT

By

**Mr. Abdul Tejan-Cole
Commissioner of the Anti-Corruption Commission
and
Leader of the Sierra Leone Delegation**

in

**The Plenary of the Third Session of the Conference of States Parties to
the United Nations Convention against Corruption**

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Madam President,

Let me start by congratulating you and other members of the bureau on your election to conduct our work during the third session of the Conference of States Parties to the United Nations Convention against Corruption and to assure you of my delegation's fullest support in this regard. Our sincere appreciation goes to the Government and People of the State of Qatar for their warm hospitality. We also commend the UNODC and the secretariat not only for their hard work leading up to this conference but also for their support for our national efforts in fighting inter alia corruption and drug trafficking.

The Sierra Leone delegation associates itself with the statements made by the distinguished representatives of Argentina and Angola on behalf of the Group of 77 and China and African Group respectively.

We however want to highlight a couple of specific concern to our delegation and to share our experience with respect to the implementation of our national anti-corruption strategy vis-à-vis the gains, challenges and the way forward.

We have come a long way since the establishment of our Anti-Corruption Commission in 2000. Just last year we enacted a new and robust anti-corruption which we are currently implementing. We have also enacted a new anti-drug trafficking law and are in the process of reviewing our anti-money laundering Act. The new Anti-Corruption Act makes adequate provision for international cooperation in the fight against corruption particularly in dealing with the extradition of corrupt persons within and without Sierra Leone. It also aligns our national legislation with the United Nations Convention Against Corruption (UNCAC) and the African Union Convention on Preventing and Combating Corruption and Related Offences both of which Sierra Leone has ratified.

The Anti-Corruption Act 2008 grants prosecutorial powers to the Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) thereby empowering the Commission to investigate and prosecute its cases without reference to the office of the Attorney General and Minister of Justice.

The Act has further increased corrupt offences from nine (9) to twenty-nine (29) which now enables the commission to engage more effectively in investigating and prosecuting a wider range of corrupt practices. Thus making both the public and private sectors liable and accountable for instances of alleged cases of corrupt practices. I must however hasten to add that the Act is not retroactive in the prosecution of its cases. These new offences include among other thing the Possession of unexplained wealth (unjust enrichment), Using influence for contracts, Influencing a public officer, Peddling influence, Bid rigging, Bribery of or by public officer to influence decision of public body, Misappropriation of donor funds or property, Abuse of office, Abuse of position, Public officer using his office for advantage and Conflict of interests. It also makes it unlawful to

impeding much needed foreign investment.

The new Act also provides adequate protection for whistleblowers and informers and for the public officers and their spouse and children to declare their assets and liabilities with a view to enhancing integrity in public life. Over 17,000 public officials including His Excellency the President, all cabinet Ministers and Parliamentarians have to date declared their assets to the Commission.

Since the coming into operation of the new law in September last year, the Commission has achieved a record number of convictions and recovered over Le 3 billion. Tougher penalties are now being imposed for violation of the Anti-Corruption Act 2008.

Progress has also been made on the preventive side with the implementation of systems review in key ministries such as health and education, improved public financial management, better coordination and cooperation between the parliamentary oversight bodies, the audit service and the Commission.

Madam President, my delegation strongly supports the need for the implementation review mechanism. Given our experience with the financing of the operations of the hybrid tribunal, the Special Court for Sierra Leone, through voluntary contributions, we endorse the view held by the Group of 77 and China and the Africa Group that funding should come from the regular budget of the United Nations.

Sierra Leone's position is crystal clear on the issue of civil society participation in the review mechanism as it is essential to ensure the credibility of the review process as provided for in the UN Convention against Corruption (UNCAC). For my delegation, the aim of the review process is to provide a balanced, informed and expert assessment of country progress in implementing the UNCAC obligations. Clearly, my delegation considers it a retrogressive move in so far as the progress made nationally is concerned if civil society is excluded from the process. In combating corruption both at national and international levels, the involvement of civil society is crucial for success. The denial of the role of civil society in the review mechanism would in our humble view constitute a repudiation of the UNCAC and represents a dangerous step backwards from standard practices for reviewing other international conventions and agreements. The UNCAC itself explicitly calls on States Parties to promote the participation of civil society in the prevention of and fight against corruption (Article 13). In all our processes nationally, civil society and the media form an integral part in the fight against corruption.

I would like to conclude my brief intervention by commending the Open-Ended Working Group on Asset Recovery for their work and to reiterate the need for the cooperation and unfettered implementation of asset recovery to support developing countries in their strive to foster their national development goals and sustainable development.

We indebted to a number of developmental partners namely DFID, GTZ, EU, UNDP, the Peacebuilding Fund and Irish Aid for the progress we have made so far in combating this scourge. We however acknowledge that there is still a long way to go and the

Government of Sierra Leone remains committed to the policy of zero tolerance in the fight against corruption.

I thank you for your kind attention.