



GOVERNMENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF SIERRA LEONE

**66TH REGULAR SESSION OF THE GENERAL CONFERENCE
INTERNATIONAL ATOMIC ENERGY AGENCY (IAEA)**

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**STATEMENT BY HIS EXCELLENCY DR LANSANA GBERIE
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PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF SIERRA LEONE TO THE UNITED
NATIONS AND OTHER INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS IN
SWITZERLAND**

SIERRA LEONE

Mr. President,

**Director-General of the International Atomic Energy
Agency,**

Excellencies,

Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen,

Good afternoon

On behalf of the Government and people of Sierra Leone it is my honour and privilege to address the General Conference.

Allow me to join earlier speakers to warmly congratulate you and your bureau on your election to lead the 66th General Conference, and to commend you for the professional conduct of the Conference thus far. We assure you of our full support and cooperation in the discharge of your duties.

Mr President,

Sierra Leone attaches great importance to the Agency and its mandate which contributes through its unique expertise to global peace, security and development, nuclear and radiation safety,

and has been a Member State of the Agency since 1967. My government is committed to promoting the peaceful use of nuclear science and technology to meet the SDGs and is working closely with the Agency to build the strong legal, institutional and regulatory framework needed for the safe application of nuclear science and technology. We strongly believe that the peaceful applications of nuclear science and technology provides solutions to socioeconomic challenges.

For our part, Sierra Leone signed its Country Programme Framework for 2019–2023 and looks forward to continue working with the Agency staff, in particular the Department of the Technical Cooperation, to develop the third cycle CPF on the bases of defined national priorities. The current CPF identifies 5 priority areas: Nuclear and radiation safety; Food and agriculture; Human health; Water resources management; and Environmental applications.

I would also like to take this opportunity to express my country's great appreciation for the Agency's assistance to Member States — including my own — in fighting the COVID-19 pandemic, including assistance in the rapid detection and management of the pandemic.

The pandemic has shown us the need for a coordinated multilateral approach. As you will remember, during the 2014 Ebola outbreak, the Agency provided specialized diagnostic equipment to help Sierra Leone in its efforts to combat the disease. The IAEA assistance supplemented Sierra Leone's ability to diagnose the virus quickly by using a diagnostic technology known as reverse transcription-polymerase chain reaction (RT-PCR). Following the outbreak, the Agency provided Sierra Leone with assistance to develop the necessary human resources to improve national ability for the early diagnosis of highly infectious diseases. Capacity to use such rapid techniques was established at Njala University. Today, the facility regularly provides regional training on the capturing and taking of samples from bats for surveys relating to emerging zoonotic diseases. In view of this, Sierra Leone welcomes the ZODIAC project and its

systematic and integrated approach to supporting the early detection of zoonotic disease outbreaks and to controlling such outbreaks.

Mr President,

Cancer remains a leading cause of health problems and death, primarily as a result of limited access to diagnosis and treatment. Against this background, the country has embraced the IAEA's Rays of Hope initiative and is strengthening its Cancer Control framework with the support of the Agency's Division of Programme of Action for Cancer Therapy and Technical Cooperation for Africa. After a comprehensive assessment of cancer control capacities and needs, Sierra Leone is prioritizing the establishment of a radiotherapy facility for cancer diagnosis and treatment, and developing a qualified workforce to improve the quality of lives of cancer patients through the provision of radiotherapy services. The government views the establishment of a cancer diagnosis and treatment facility as a top priority and has allocated resources to start the process, even in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic. In this regard, Sierra Leone greatly appreciates the Agency's support in planning, raising funds and providing specialist training for the country's first radiotherapy facility at the Lekka Hospital in Freetown. With the support of the Agency, Sierra Leone also developed a National Cancer Control Plan (NCCP). The NCCP draft is currently being reviewed by IAEA, IARC and WHO technical officers.

For us, marine plastic pollution is an enormous threat to marine life and ecosystems, food safety, and human health and ultimately jeopardizing progress towards the SDGs. As a country especially vulnerable to the effects of climate change and concerned by rising marine plastic pollution, Sierra Leone welcomes the NUTEC Plastics initiative, which would be a complement to nuclear solutions offering Member States an appropriate platform for cross-learning, using radiation technology in recycling, and marine monitoring through isotopic tracing. This initiative is a step towards freeing the oceans of plastic pollution and its effects on food chains and ecosystems.

Additionally, the IAEA fellowships, awarded through the TC programme, are supporting the work of Sierra Leone's Nuclear Safety and Radiation Protection Authority by providing hands on experience related to the application of nuclear technologies.

Mr President, Excellencies,

With the support from the IAEA, Sierra Leone is implementing several projects which focus on development of technologies, technology transfer and capacity building in nuclear science and technology applications in food and climate smart agriculture, healthcare, and environment.

Sierra Leone looks forward to more partnerships in such areas as energy planning, food and agriculture, health and nutrition, nuclear knowledge development and management, radiation safety, and water and environment. We are confident that continuous collaboration and support from the IAEA and other development partners will enable Sierra Leone to increase productivity and climate resilience, meeting its key SGD goals.

The Agency's Technical Cooperation programme remains a vital contributor to national development goals and the SDGs. Sierra Leone recognizes the importance of the development and transfer of affordable nuclear technology to sustain and enhance scientific and technological capabilities in developing countries for expanding and promoting the use of nuclear technology for peaceful purposes. As such, Sierra Leone reiterates its view that the resources available for the TC Programme should be sufficient, assured and predictable to meet its mandated objectives.

Sierra Leone recognizes the nuclear disarmament obligation enshrined in the NPT remained unmet. It is importance to strengthen the international nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation regime, with the NPT as its cornerstone. In this regard, Sierra Leone recognizes the Agency's safeguards and verification function plays a critical role in the global nuclear non-proliferation agenda, providing the international community with assurances that all nuclear material remains in peaceful uses.

As part of its commitment to the nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation regime, Sierra Leone signed the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW) at a high-level ceremony at the United Nations in New York on (22 September) at the margins of the UN General Assembly.

Mr President,

Sierra Leone recognizes the unique role that the Agency plays in enhancing the capabilities of Member States, and strongly believes that the Agency should be fully geared to help its Member States, particularly the developing countries, in harnessing nuclear technologies to meet diverse development challenges in the fields of health, agriculture, industry and environmental protection.

As the international community is faced with many challenges, now more than ever there is a dire need for multilateralism and strong effective multilateral organizations such as the IAEA. We must continue collectively to fulfil the Agency's objective of seeking to accelerate and enlarge the contribution of atomic energy to peace, health and prosperity throughout the world, as required under its Statute. It is high time to bring out the human side of nuclear energy.

Mr President,

In closing, Sierra Leone reaffirms its commitment to the Agency's ideals, and will continue its cooperation with the Agency and with Member States to ensure nuclear science and technology is deployed more effectively. I wish for the successful completion of the 66th General Conference.

I Thank you Mr President.