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Fourth report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Integrated Peacebuilding Office in Sierra Leone

I. Introduction

1. The present report is submitted pursuant to Security Council resolution 1886 (2009), in which the Council requested the Secretary-General to submit a report on the activities of the United Nations Integrated Peacebuilding Office in Sierra Leone (UNIPSIL) every six months. The report covers the period from 1 September 2009 to 28 February 2010.

II. Major developments

A. Political developments

2. The political situation in the country remained calm during the reporting period. On 9 October 2009, at the State opening of the third session of Parliament, the President, Ernest Bai Koroma, elaborated on the progress made by his Government, including in the areas of infrastructure development, education and agriculture. In a New Year message to the country, the President referred to the economic challenges facing Sierra Leone and called on Sierra Leoneans to renew their determination to overcome the country's difficulties.

3. During the reporting period, 37 paramount chieftaincy elections were held in the country. Those elections were significant, given the crucial role traditional authorities play in local administration. The recently enacted Chieftaincy Act of 2009 provided an improved legal framework for the elections. Moreover, the participation of representatives of rural communities in the elections of their paramount chiefs underlined the continuing development of democratic tendencies at all levels in Sierra Leone.

4. While the elections were peaceful and credible overall, election observers highlighted some difficulties in the process, including uneven interpretation or insufficient knowledge of the Chieftaincy Act; interference in the electoral processes by political parties or surrogates contrary to the applicable legislation; and the inability of women to stand as candidates in some parts of the country, owing to cultural stipulations and conflicting interpretations of the 1991 Constitution.



5. The implementation of the joint communiqué signed on 2 April by the major opposition party, the Sierra Leone People's Party (SLPP), and the ruling All People's Congress (APC) continued in the period under review. The Peacebuilding Fund provided vital financial support for the implementation of the joint communiqué.

6. In collaboration with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the Political Parties Registration Commission, UNIPSIL continued its well-received grass-roots sensitization campaign on the essential messages of the joint communiqué, through the use of dramatic sketches and radio programmes in all 149 chiefdoms of the country. The Joint Communiqué Adherence Committee, comprising APC, SLPP, the Sierra Leone police and the Inter-Religious Council of Sierra Leone and co-chaired by the Political Parties Registration Commission and UNIPSIL, met within the reporting period and reviewed progress in the implementation of the communiqué.

7. The Commission of Inquiry established pursuant to the joint communiqué completed its investigation of alleged acts of rape and sexual violence reported to have occurred during attacks on the SLPP offices in Freetown on 16 March 2009. The Commission stated that after a thorough consideration of the law governing rape and indecent assault and based on the testimonies received, there was no evidence to sustain the allegations of rape. The Commission nonetheless found that the victims had been subjected to physical mistreatment and other inhumane conduct that constituted a breach of their human rights under the Constitution. It called on the Government to take steps, as a matter of social justice, to address the needs of the victims. SLPP strongly criticized the findings of the Commission and threatened to initiate legal proceedings to challenge them.

8. On 29 September, President Koroma appointed an Independent Review Panel, as stipulated in the joint communiqué, to inquire into the causes of the political violence of March 2009. The Panel began its proceedings on 15 February 2010. As had been the case with regard to the Commission of Inquiry to investigate the reported incidents of sexual violence, the members of the Independent Review Panel were selected by President Koroma from a list of nominees proposed by SLPP and APC. Technical and financial support for the work of the Panel is being made available by UNIPSIL, UNDP and the Peacebuilding Fund. The Panel has invited testimony from all political parties, the country's democratic institutions, the police and Government officials.

9. In December 2009, UNIPSIL, in collaboration with UNDP and the Political Parties Registration Commission, organized intra-party retreats for SLPP, APC and the People's Movement for Democratic Change (PMDC). The retreats focused on leadership training for senior members of the political parties and provided an opportunity for the parties to strengthen their internal democratic mechanisms. Within the same period, separate meetings of the women's wings of APC, SLPP and PMDC were arranged by UNIPSIL, UNDP and the Commission to consider ways of improving the representation of women in the national political institutions.

10. The intra-party retreats having concluded, a national inter-party dialogue to further promote confidence among the political parties will be organized by UNIPSIL and the Political Parties Registration Commission in April 2010. As part of the implementation of the joint communiqué, the political party youth outreach programme, focusing on political tolerance and non-violence, was completed in

14 districts, including the western area of the country. Similar programmes are planned for the coming months.

11. Other efforts to implement the joint communiqué, including through the establishment of a resource centre for political parties, are ongoing. In order to build confidence and promote reconciliation, financial assistance for the repair of the damaged SLPP offices in Freetown was made available by the Peacebuilding Fund, with the approval of the Government, and work on the building has commenced.

12. Despite those initiatives, the relationship between the ruling party and the major opposition party continues to be characterized by deep mistrust and mutual suspicion. In that regard, although there has been an improvement in the overall political situation, formidable difficulties remain in fostering a culture of political tolerance. In addition to instances of violence during the chieftaincy elections, there were fierce clashes between APC and SLPP supporters during a local council by-election held in Tongo, Kenema District, on 13 February 2010.

13. With regard to the review of the 1991 Constitution, no action has been taken by the Government on the report submitted by the Constitutional Review Commission. Given the importance of the constitutional review process for the consolidation of the democratic foundations of the country, there is a need to establish a wide-ranging consultative mechanism for the further discussion of the review process and its next steps.

B. Security developments

14. Overall, the security situation in Sierra Leone was calm during the reporting period. However, a sudden rise in armed robberies in the second half of 2009 was a matter of concern. From 10 October to 19 November 2009, 56 persons were arrested for such attacks. In order to address the problem, on 10 October 2009 President Koroma invoked the Military Assistance to Civil Power Act, which legally enabled the Republic of Sierra Leone Armed Forces to work jointly with the Sierra Leone police. Their combined efforts proved successful, as robberies throughout the country declined sharply early in 2010.

15. On 19 September, there was an altercation between personnel of the armed forces and the police in the Waterloo area of Freetown, which resulted in damage to a police station and equipment, as well as injuries to several policemen. An inquiry, led by representatives of the country's security organs, was commissioned by the National Security Coordinating Group to investigate the circumstances that led to the clash. UNIPSIL was invited to participate in the inquiry. Senior officers of the police and the armed forces took immediate steps, including through mediation, to improve the working relationship between the institutions.

16. UNIPSIL, with support from the Government of Sierra Leone as well as UNDP and the Peacebuilding Fund, has developed a comprehensive strategy aimed at strengthening the cohesion between the police and the armed forces. A training package for over 7,500 soldiers and police officers has been formulated in the area of strategic communication, attitudinal change and discipline. The training will focus on lower- and mid-level command staff. Joint police and military liaison units will also be established.

17. In the period under review, the Government took steps to ensure that ex-soldiers demobilized as part of the core review of the armed forces received their entitlements. However, some of the ex-soldiers affected, engaged in demonstrations and damaged property in protest at the non-payment of benefits. The Government indicated that a review of the pension benefits for some of the ex-servicemen concerned is under way with a view to bringing them into line with current inflation rates.

18. With regard to relations with its neighbours, Sierra Leone continued to maintain cordial ties with Guinea. Border patrols by the armed services of both countries continued without any difficulties, and military teams exchanged visits to discuss common security concerns. By a letter dated 14 September, the Government of Guinea requested the Government of Sierra Leone to investigate allegations that some 4,000 mercenaries were being trained in Sierra Leone with a view to launching an attack on Guinea. The Sierra Leone security sector agencies thoroughly investigated the allegations and determined that there was no evidence to support them. On 9 December, Sierra Leone hosted the twenty-sixth meeting of the Committee of Chiefs of Defence Staff of the Economic Community of West African States, at which recent developments in Guinea and the subregion were discussed.

19. Four unauthorized foreign fishing vessels were apprehended in the coastal waters of Sierra Leone in the reporting period. The armed forces assisted in an operation carried out by the United States Coast Guard pursuant to a bilateral maritime assistance agreement concluded between Sierra Leone and the Government of the United States of America in June 2009. Forfeiture orders and fines of about \$2 million were imposed by the Sierra Leonean judicial authorities. The protection of the country's marine resources is vital and will help Sierra Leone to increase its revenue-generation capacity. In the period under review, the armed forces also benefited from training offered by the United States Navy on boarding techniques and vessel maintenance.

20. General William E. Ward, the Commander of the United States Africa Command, visited Sierra Leone on 15 September 2009. In a meeting with President Koroma, General Ward reaffirmed the commitment of the United States Government to strengthening relations with Sierra Leone and helping improve the capacity of its armed forces.

C. Economic and social developments

21. The global economic crisis has significantly affected Sierra Leone. Economic growth fell from 5.5 per cent in 2008 to approximately 4 per cent in 2009; it is expected to rebound to approximately 5.5 per cent in 2010. Exports, including sales of diamonds, fell significantly. Consequently, the country's current account has worsened. Inflation, which had risen at the outset of the global crisis, fell in the second half of 2009.

22. In September 2009, it was announced that an oil well with a potential of 200 million barrels had been discovered off the coast of Sierra Leone by a consortium led by Anadarko, a United States company, with Australian, Spanish and Irish partners. While it remains to be seen whether the oil found will be sufficient for commercial exploitation, the discovery has generated substantial publicity and has injected further momentum into efforts aimed at improving the management of the natural resource sectors, including the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative,

for which Sierra Leone is a candidate country with a 9 March deadline for compliance. UNDP and the World Bank are actively supporting those efforts, while Germany's development agency and the African Development Bank are also considering participating.

23. A new Mines and Minerals Act was signed into law by President Koroma in January 2010. The law substantially improves the regulation of mining activities in the country. It makes provision for greater transparency and predictability, limits the use of discretionary power and expands stakeholder involvement in licensing decisions. The law also increases royalty rates and resources for community development and sets new standards for environmental protection and worker safety.

24. The Goods and Services Tax Bill was enacted by Parliament on 4 June 2009 and came into effect early in 2010. A wide range of taxes, including import sales tax, domestic sales tax, entertainment tax and restaurant and food tax, were replaced by the goods and services tax, which helped to simplify the previous system of indirect taxation. Some essential items, including rice, pipe-borne water, fuel, books, educational and medical services and selected pharmaceutical supplies, will not be taxed to ensure that the poorer members of the community are not adversely affected by the introduction of the goods and services tax. It is believed that the tax will raise more revenue for the Government while having little or no effect on the cost of living. Overall, taxpayers will pay no more tax than previously, and the savings for businesses in terms of time and the cost of accounting for tax will be significant.

25. Furthermore, during the period under review the Government commissioned the Bumbuna hydroelectric project, which is expected to have a positive impact on the economy in 2010, including by reducing fuel import costs.

26. On 18 and 19 January, the President of the World Bank, Robert B. Zoellick, visited Sierra Leone. During the visit he met President Koroma and other senior Government officials, my Executive Representative, international development partners, the Chair of the Anti-Corruption Commission and representatives of civil society and the private sector. While acknowledging the Government's efforts to implement the Agenda for Change, Mr. Zoellick stressed the need for continued progress on good governance and the combating of corruption. He also committed the World Bank to supporting the telecommunications infrastructure of Sierra Leone, the West Africa Power Pool and regional fisheries management solutions.

27. Sierra Leone signed the Comprehensive Africa Agricultural Development Programme Compact in September 2009 and is currently in the process of developing investment plans in line with the National Sustainable Agricultural Development Plan for 2010-2020. The World Food Programme (WFP) will support, at the request of the Government, the implementation of Comprehensive Africa Agricultural Development Programme safety net programmes in four areas: (a) the provision of productive safety nets, such as food and cash-for-work schemes; (b) the provision of social safety nets through maternal and child health and school feeding programmes; (c) enhanced emergency response capacity to respond to localized disasters, such as floods, and for climate change adaptation; and (d) capacity-building, policy support and the promotion of social protection.

28. In order to raise awareness of HIV/AIDS and strengthen local partnerships, the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) organized, on 12 November 2009, a national partnership forum, which was attended by over 300.

UNAIDS also arranged the 2009 World AIDS Day campaign, on the theme “Help protect your baby: get tested for HIV now”. A total of 9,814 people, 7,295 females and 2,519 males, were tested for HIV during the campaign.

III. Advancing peacebuilding

29. On 18 and 19 November, the Government of Sierra Leone and its development partners held the sixth Consultative Group meeting, in London. The aim of the meeting was to broaden the donor support base for Sierra Leone and to encourage existing donors to increase their assistance to the country. One full day of the meeting was focused on private sector development and fostering private and public sector partnerships.

30. The Consultative Group meeting endorsed both the United Nations multi-donor trust fund, which focuses on capacity-building, and the World Bank multi-donor trust fund, which focuses on infrastructure. The meeting also led to an invitation to the Government of Sierra Leone to attend the annual Coordination Group meeting of a number of key Arab countries, hosted by the Arab Bank for Economic Development in Africa, held in Khartoum from 11 to 13 January 2010.

31. In preparation for the Consultative Group meeting, my Executive Representative travelled to Brussels, Madrid, The Hague, Copenhagen, Stockholm, Oslo, Helsinki and London to meet with senior officials in order to promote the Government’s Agenda for Change and to mobilize support for the United Nations joint vision. My Executive Representative highlighted the United Nations multi-donor trust fund for Sierra Leone, which became operational on 1 November 2009, as the preferred United Nations funding channel in the future.

32. On 27 October 2009, John McNee, Chair of the Sierra Leone configuration of the Peacebuilding Commission, endorsed and communicated to Member States the United Nations in kind appeal for boats and vehicles for the security sector agencies of Sierra Leone. To date, two Peacebuilding Commission members, Thailand and Egypt, have expressed an interest in the appeal. It is hoped that more members will review the appeal and consider making appropriate contributions.

33. The aid policy endorsed at the Sierra Leone Consultative Group meeting will pave the way for the establishment of an improved aid coordination architecture. In January 2010, discussions on the details of the aid architecture were held with the aim of operationalizing the new aid coordination structure. The new aid architecture will allow the United Nations and other partners to better support the Government’s Agenda for Change.

IV. Support to democratic institutions

A. Sierra Leone broadcasting corporation

34. The joint communiqué of 2 April 2009 called on political parties to work towards the creation of an independent national broadcasting corporation. The Government continued to make major strides in establishing an independent national broadcaster to which the assets of United Nations Radio will be transferred. Since its inception, in 2000, United Nations Radio, which has the widest national coverage

in the country and round-the-clock programming, has been a source of impartial news and, as such, is a critical component of the peace consolidation process.

35. The United Nations, the Parliament, the Sierra Leone Association of Journalists and other stakeholders raised concerns regarding the independence of the corporation. Accordingly, important amendments, including a requirement that the appointment of the Director-General of the corporation by the President be subject to the approval of Parliament, were made to a bill amended by Parliament on 17 December.

36. It is envisaged that the corporation will be formally launched on 27 April. A transition management team, comprising the Ministry of Information and Communication, the Sierra Leone Association of Journalists and representatives of civil society, has been established. The Peacebuilding Fund has approved \$750,000 to support the transition. In preparation for their responsibilities, trustees have received training courses from the BBC World Service Trust and UNIPSIL.

37. In a spirit of bipartisanship, the Government appointed Septimus Kaikai, the Minister for Information and Communication in the previous (SLPP) Government, as the Chairman of the Board of Trustees. Other trustees include representatives of the Council of Paramount Chiefs and the Sierra Leone Bar Association. Vacancy notices for key management positions have been issued and, once the positions have been filled, the transition process will be driven by the corporation management team, with UNIPSIL, UNDP and other partners playing a supportive role.

B. Independent Media Commission

38. The Independent Media Commission announced on 12 February 2010 that the Freetown City Council, which is run by the ruling party, will not be permitted to operate a radio station. Legal proceedings challenging the withdrawal by the Independent Media Commission of an SLPP radio station licence were adjourned as a result of a court ruling issued in Freetown. In November 2009, with support from UNIPSIL, the Commission carried out training programmes for journalists in a number of areas, including media law and investigative reporting.

C. Political Parties Registration Commission

39. The Government of Sierra Leone continued to restructure the Political Parties Registration Commission, with support from UNIPSIL and UNDP. The process will entail the recruitment of permanent staff for the Commission, as well as financial autonomy. In January 2010, UNIPSIL international partners, the Department for International Development of the United Kingdom, the European Commission and Irish Aid, approved \$1.8 million for the upgrading of the operational and administrative capacities of the Commission as well as of the National Electoral Commission.

D. National Electoral Commission

40. In December 2009 and January 2010, the National Electoral Commission and the Ministry of Internal Affairs, Local Government and Rural Development jointly

organized paramount chieftaincy elections in several chiefdoms in the country. Supplementing the support from the Government of Sierra Leone, the European Union and the Governments of Ireland and the United Kingdom made available further financial assistance through an electoral basket fund, managed by UNDP. In the period under review, the Commission also conducted local council by-elections in Bo and Kenema Districts.

E. Parliament

41. With assistance from the Peacebuilding Fund, 20 additional clerks and researchers were recruited for the Parliament of Sierra Leone. The parliamentary library was refurbished and 20 computers and a number of books were purchased. Parliament received two minibuses and six motorbikes to enhance the work of its oversight committees. Training programmes for the clerks and researchers began in February 2010. Furthermore, seminars were offered to parliamentarians on transparency issues in the extractive industries, including the oil industry.

F. Sierra Leone police

42. Efforts to boost the capacity of the police in the area of public order management continued in the reporting period. Through the Peacebuilding Fund, vehicles, helmets, batons, shields, handcuffs and protective clothing valued at \$909,606 were procured and delivered to the police. In addition, 2,423 officers were trained in public order management. Another 134 officers assigned to the Police Complaints, Discipline and Internal Investigations Department were trained and provided with equipment.

43. In order to support cooperation between the police and the media, UNIPSIL, with the assistance of the Government of Luxembourg, conducted three regional workshops, at which modalities for improved relations between the police and the media were agreed upon in a memorandum of understanding. UNIPSIL assisted the police in enhancing community relations through the local police partnership boards, and four partnership training workshops funded by the Government of Luxembourg were organized for religious, traditional and community leaders.

G. Decentralization

44. The Ministry of Internal Affairs, Local Government and Rural Development, working together with the Decentralization Secretariat, launched the performance assessment results system for local councils in November 2009. The new system will enhance the accountability of councils to their constituents. Female councillors from all 19 local councils were trained by the Decentralization Secretariat on leadership and confidence-building in November 2009.

45. The Ministry of Finance and Economic Development also trained internal auditors of the 19 local councils. The provision of council offices by the Decentralization Secretariat is in progress. A financial agreement with the International Development Agency provided \$20 million for decentralized service delivery and the decentralization process in November 2009. Progress is being made

in the devolution of 75 functions to local councils. However, there is a need for financial support for local council strategic plans and initiatives.

V. Human rights and the rule of law

A. Support to human rights and the rule of law

46. The increase in incidents of sexual and gender-based violence remains a serious concern for human rights organizations, as well as for the Government. Various activities aimed at enhancing the capacity of the National Human Rights Commission and other local stakeholders in the area of issues relating to human rights and the rule of law were undertaken by UNIPSIL in the reporting period. Accordingly, 120 persons from a broad range of civil society organizations active in four districts were trained in human rights monitoring and reporting. In addition, 80 prison officers received training on human rights. A resource centre for civil society organizations with Internet access, a conference facility and human rights resource materials was established in Freetown.

47. In collaboration with UNDP, a workshop was organized in September 2009 for the members of the parliamentary Human Rights Committee on human rights, gender and access to justice. In December, UNIPSIL and UNDP facilitated a dialogue forum for civil society and parliamentarians.

48. The construction of two magistrate courts in Freetown is proceeding smoothly, and the establishment of a fast-track commercial court is also in progress. The judiciary also adopted two policy documents in October 2009, namely, a bail policy guideline for magistrates and judges and an operation manual for bailiffs.

49. With support from the Peacebuilding Fund, progress has also been made in the refurbishment of Mafanta prison, but the completion of that project has been hampered by a lack of resources. It is expected that, once the work has been completed, the prison will help to relieve overcrowding at Pademba Road prison in Freetown.

B. National Human Rights Commission

50. The National Human Rights Commission continued to further strengthen its outreach programme and its reporting on the human rights situation in the country. Among other activities, the Commission carried out sensitization activities related to its 2008 human rights report. On 7 December, Parliament debated matters raised in the report and subsequently endorsed it. The Government has made a commitment to covering the operational costs of the Commission in 2010, including staff salaries. UNIPSIL has continued to mobilize international donor support to permit the implementation of the Commission's strategic plan.

51. Notwithstanding those positive developments, there is still a deficit in the resources required for the implementation of the Commission's mandate.

C. Implementation of the recommendations of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission

52. Progress has been made in the implementation of the recommendations contained in the report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, in particular through the reparations programme. With support from the Peacebuilding Fund, microgrants were provided to more than 13,000 eligible victims of the civil war to enable them to set up small-scale businesses. In addition, 7,000 child victims, mainly war orphans and children born as a result of sexual violence, received financial support to pay fees and buy learning materials. More than 200 victims of sexual violence received treatment.

53. Despite those welcome developments, there remains a significant shortfall in the funds required to implement the reparations programme. In that regard, on 5 December, President Koroma launched a special trust fund for war victims to mobilize resources from local and international partners.

VI. Special Court

54. On 26 October 2009, the Appeals Chamber of the Special Court for Sierra Leone upheld the judgment of the Trial Chamber and convicted eight persons in the case of *Prosecutor v. Issa Sesay, Morris Kallon and Augustine Gbao*. The convicted persons were members of the Revolutionary United Front, the Armed Forces Revolutionary Council and the Civil Defence Forces, the three main armed militias that operated during the conflict in Sierra Leone.

55. On 13 August and 26 October 2009, the Special Court for Sierra Leone designated Rwanda as the State where convicted persons will serve their sentences. Subsequently, on 31 October 2009, the convicts were transferred to Mpanga prison, Rwanda, to serve the remainder of their sentences. The Special Court is monitoring the conditions relating to the enforcement of the prisoners' sentences.

56. The trial of Charles Taylor, the former President of Liberia, is continuing at The Hague. The cross-examination of Mr. Taylor ended on 5 February 2010, and the next stage of the trial involves testimony from defence witnesses. Judgment in the case is scheduled for December 2010, and the Court's activities are expected to conclude in mid-2011.

VII. Progress on the integration process

57. The implementation of the United Nations joint vision is progressing. United Nations agencies have worked in an integrated manner to identify programme deliverables for each of the 21 programmes of the joint vision. That approach will ensure that agencies do not duplicate efforts within a single programme and allow for the monitoring and evaluation of each programme within the joint vision.

58. The common United Nations garage, security service and medical facility all continue to make slow but steady progress as key operational elements of the integrated approach. Cost-sharing agreements between UNIPSIL and United Nations agencies were concluded during the period under review. A new field office to serve the United Nations family in Bo became operational. The joint medical clinic

extended its services to the Special Court for Sierra Leone and initiated negotiations with the diplomatic community to offer services at a fee. The United Nations helicopter service, which offers the Government and development partners an efficient connection to rural communities, is recognized as a key service and as an important United Nations contribution to the peacebuilding effort.

59. Direct programme support, which entails the transition from direct United Nations execution to the national execution of programmes and projects, is now being used by the United Nations country team in Sierra Leone. The roll out of direct programme support is part of a gradual process leading to the normalization of the way in which the United Nations and the Government interact and is a positive indicator of the country's ongoing post-conflict stabilization process.

VIII. Main risks

A. Corruption

60. Efforts to combat corruption continued in the period under review. At an emergency Cabinet meeting on 26 January 2010, President Koroma cited several instances of corrupt practices in a number of Government entities and unequivocally demanded that immediate steps be taken to prevent their recurrence.

61. On 4 November 2009, the Minister of Health was relieved of his duties and charged with offences under the country's Anti-Corruption Act, including failure to comply with regulations concerning the issuance of contracts and abuse of office. In December, President Koroma directed that the Head of the National Revenue Authority be suspended from office pending investigations by the Commission into the misappropriation of donor funds, the corrupt acquisition of wealth and related offences. The Commission continued to engage civil society and tertiary institutions in combating corruption. One of the country's international partners, Irish Aid, provided €200,000 to support the work of the Commission.

62. The ranking of Sierra Leone in the Transparency International Corruption Perceptions Index for 2009 improved by 12 places.

B. Illicit drugs

63. To deal with the problem of illegal narcotics, the Sierra Leone Joint Drug Interdiction Task Force has, in addition to obtaining strong support from the Government of Sierra Leone, received technical and financial assistance from the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime and the United States Africa Command. A computer-based training centre was established at the Task Force headquarters and a variety of computer equipment and training on drug interdiction, intelligence analysis, search and seizure was provided. As a result, important breakthroughs were made by the task force in disrupting the activities of drug smugglers, including suspects linked to the importation of 703 tons of cocaine into Sierra Leone in July 2008.

64. In February 2010, UNIPSIL, in collaboration with the Government of Sierra Leone, ECOWAS, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, the Department of Political Affairs, the Department of Peacekeeping Operations and the United Nations Office for West Africa, convened an expert group meeting and a ministerial

conference with the aim of implementing the West Africa Coast Initiative. The Initiative will support the ECOWAS regional action plan on illicit drug trafficking and organized crime. The Conference was also aimed at establishing transnational crime units in Sierra Leone, Liberia, Côte d'Ivoire and Guinea-Bissau to tackle organized crime and drug trafficking as well as build national and regional capacities in the areas of drug interdiction, forensics, intelligence, border management, money-laundering and criminal justice. A joint declaration reaffirming commitments to fight illicit drug trafficking and organized crime in West Africa, as well as the operational modalities for the transnational crime units, was adopted at the conference.

C. Youth unemployment

65. On 7 December 2009, Parliament enacted the National Youth Commission Act, which will allow for the creation of a dedicated Commission to focus on youth employment and empowerment and serve as an organ for coordinating all youth-related issues. Discussions are in progress on start-up arrangements for the Commission and to mobilize support from international development partners.

66. An estimated 600,000 young people in the country are currently unemployed. To address youth unemployment, a sectoral working group, with the participation of the United Nations, the World Bank, the German development agency, the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports and the Ministry of Employment, Labour and Social Security, was established in 2009. The group devised a strategic framework that emphasizes job creation. Efforts to create jobs in Sierra Leone will be boosted significantly with the recent commitment of \$20 million by the World Bank to the youth employment sector.

IX. Observations

67. Corruption has long been recognized as an obstacle to Sierra Leone's progress. I therefore welcome the strong recognition by President Koroma of the challenge corruption poses and the swift action taken by the Anti-Corruption Commission to combat the problem. I encourage further efforts to ensure that corruption does not weaken laudable progress towards the development of Sierra Leone and call for joint action by all national stakeholders to deal with the matter.

68. I thank Sierra Leone's international development partners for their support and invite other partners to join in providing critical financial support to enable Sierra Leoneans to enjoy the dividends of peace. In particular, I appeal to international partners to provide additional support to the National Human Rights Commission, as well as the Government's Special Trust Fund for War Victims.

69. In addition, I note the shortfall in anticipated donor funding required for the implementation of the Government's Agenda for Change. I therefore appeal to Sierra Leone's international development partners to generously assist the Government of Sierra Leone in implementing its Agenda for Change. Support for the Agenda for Change will enable the Government to meet the Agenda's main objectives, including in particular in developing infrastructure and increasing agricultural productivity. The attainment of these goals will in turn help to improve

the difficult socio-economic indicators which have all contributed to making Sierra Leone a fragile State, notwithstanding progress thus far achieved.

70. I am encouraged by the improvements in the political climate in Sierra Leone since the signing of the joint communiqué on 2 April 2009. However, the challenge of fostering political tolerance and promoting non-violence still regrettably remains. Recent developments, notably the violent and disturbing clashes between supporters of the major opposition, SLPP and the ruling APC, on 13 February 2009 do not augur well for the peace and stability of the country as well as for the elections to be held in 2012. There is an urgent need to build trust and mutual confidence between major political parties. I therefore urge SLPP and APC to abide by the code of conduct for political parties as well as the commitments of the joint communiqué of 2 April 2009.

71. I welcome the collaboration of the Government of Sierra Leone and international partners in combating the threat of illegal narcotics and organized crime which, if unchecked, could undermine the peace consolidation process in Sierra Leone. I urge continued efforts in that regard. I wish to reiterate the appeal of the Chair of the Sierra Leone configuration of the Peacebuilding Commission to Member States to donate vehicles and boats for Sierra Leone's security sector agencies in order to improve their effectiveness in dealing with organized crime.

72. Finally, I wish to express my sincere appreciation to staff of United Nations agencies and programmes and UNIPSIL who, under the leadership of my Executive Representative, Michael von der Schulenburg, have made notable progress in achieving the objectives of the United Nations joint vision as well as assisting the Government of Sierra Leone in advancing the Agenda for Change. I also thank all international partners for their indispensable collaboration with the United Nations in Sierra Leone.
