



PERMANENT MISSION OF THE REPUBLIC OF SIERRA LEONE TO THE UNITED NATIONS

STATEMENT

BY

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AT THE

UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY 80TH SESSION FIRST
COMMITTEE GENERAL DEBATE ON ALL DISARMAMENT AND
INTERNATIONAL SECURITY AGENDA ITEMS

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Mr. Chair,
Excellencies,
Distinguished Delegates,

1. I congratulate you, Chair, and the members of the Bureau on your election and stewardship of the work of the First Committee for this historic 80th session of the General Assembly. Sierra Leone aligns itself with the statements delivered by Guinea-Bissau on behalf of the African Group and by Indonesia on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM). I now have the honour to deliver additional remarks in our national capacity.
2. Sierra Leone recognizes that the Committee's substantive discussions during the 79th session of the General Assembly helped to advance consensus on key disarmament and international security issues in support of global peace and stability. We therefore commend the leadership provided by **Ambassador Maritza Chan Valverde of Costa Rica**, the first woman to chair the First Committee, and the Bureau of the 79th Session.
3. We must build upon this momentum to identify and implement decisive measures that can end the

heightened geopolitical tensions threatening international peace and security. This body remains a beacon of hope for the preservation of humanity and future generations.

4. We urge all Member States to intensify efforts to uphold international law and the principles of the UN Charter, and to ensure the peaceful settlement of disputes. This is vital to reversing the current trend of conflicts that undermine global peace, security, stability, and sustainable development.
5. The erosion of international norms and the rise in military expenditures to unprecedented levels have weakened global stability and diverted resources from development priorities. True international peace and security can only prevail where all Member States respect international law, uphold the Charter, commit to dialogue, and work collectively for collective security.
6. Sierra Leone remains firmly committed to engagement on disarmament and non-proliferation, including nuclear weapons, other weapons of mass destruction (WMD), and conventional arms such as small arms and light weapons (SALW) and their ammunition. These efforts are

indispensable to strengthening global peace and security, and we look forward to consensus outcomes that reflect the diverse realities and priorities of Member States.

7. As a post-conflict nation, Sierra Leone reaffirms that the illicit trade, transfer, diversion, and poor management of conventional weapons, particularly SALWs, fuel armed conflicts, undermine the rule of law, and erode respect for international humanitarian and human rights law.
8. At the regional level, we commend the African Union for its sustained leadership in promoting peace and security, notably through the *Silencing the Guns* initiative and the Bamako Declaration. We further recall the AU Peace and Security Council's 1085th meeting, which called for a continental strategy to tackle illicit firearms and emerging weapons systems, emphasizing closer coordination with African members of the UN Security Council.
9. As a current elected member of the UN Security Council, Sierra Leone will continue to raise its voice on non-proliferation of SALWs, including convening a high-level open debate on the Secretary-General's annual report during our presidency of the Council in November 2025.

This follows our convening an Arria-formula meeting on “Small Arms Control and Weapons Management in UN Sanctions Regimes” in April this year, co-sponsored by the A3 Plus members Algeria, Guyana, and Somalia. Our prioritization of the issue in the Security Council reflects our recognition of the grave threat posed by SALWs to international peace and security, and our call for concrete national measures to curb illicit transfers and trade. We also urge the full implementation of relevant resolutions, including 2117 (2013), 2220 (2015), 2616 (2021), and 2654 (2022).

10. Normative instruments such as the 2001 UN Programme of Action on SALW, the 2005 International Tracing Instrument, the UN Convention against Transnational Organized Crime, the UN Register of Conventional Arms, and the 2013 Arms Trade Treaty (ATT) together provide a solid framework for effective arms management and accountability.

11. In Africa, the continued availability of illicit weapons, particularly in the hands of non-state actors, remains a major driver of instability. Sierra Leone reiterates the importance of implementing the ATT provisions aimed at

addressing illicit trafficking and diversion risks, in harmony with other relevant international and regional instruments.

12. Sierra Leone reaffirms that the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) remains the cornerstone of the global nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation regime. While we welcome progress under Pillars II and III, we remain deeply concerned at the lack of progress under the Nuclear Disarmament Pillar. We therefore call for a balanced and comprehensive implementation of all three pillars of the NPT.

13. The total elimination of nuclear weapons remains the only absolute guarantee against their use or threat of use. We urge all nuclear-armed States to renew their commitments to transparent, verifiable, irreversible, and non-discriminatory nuclear disarmament through both bilateral and multilateral engagement.

14. Sierra Leone is proud to have joined Indonesia and the Solomon Islands in depositing our instrument of ratification of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW) on 24 September 2024. We believe the TPNW complements the NPT and provides renewed impetus

toward ending the long-standing deadlock in multilateral nuclear disarmament negotiations.

15. Sierra Leone remains concerned about the adverse implications of emerging technologies in the military domain, including artificial intelligence (AI) and autonomous weapons systems (AWS), for global peace and security. The use of explosive weapons in populated areas poses grave humanitarian and ethical challenges.

Mr. Chair,

16. The rapid evolution of AI technologies, though transformative in development sectors such as agriculture and health—poses new risks when applied to warfare. These technologies must be aligned with international norms governing peace and security.
17. As Chair of ECOWAS, Sierra Leone underscores the importance of the *Path Towards the Negotiation Process of a Legally Binding Instrument* adopted by General Assembly resolution 78/241, which requests the Secretary-General to gather Member States' views on regulating AWS from humanitarian, legal, security, technological, and ethical perspectives.

18. Sierra Leone emphasizes the urgency of developing subregional accountability standards and operational frameworks for the procurement, transfer, and deployment of AWS, alongside robust legal mechanisms that uphold international law and human rights. We stress the importance of building on existing treaties and supporting ongoing UN efforts toward a legally binding instrument on autonomous weapons systems.

19. Sierra Leone therefore reaffirms its support for General Assembly resolution 75/31, *Prohibition of the Development and Manufacture of New Types of Weapons of Mass Destruction and New Systems and Methods of Delivery*.

20. We further welcome the peaceful use of nuclear, biological, and chemical materials for non-military purposes, particularly to strengthen national capacities in education, agriculture, climate adaptation, and scientific research.

21. Sierra Leone calls for responsible state behaviour in cyberspace. Compliance with international norms governing cyber conduct is essential to prevent malicious

activities that threaten global stability. We urge all actors to refrain from cyber-attacks and to pursue peaceful means of resolving related disputes.

22. In closing, Sierra Leone acknowledges the invaluable contributions of civil society, international partners, and women's organizations to global disarmament, peace, and security. We will continue to advocate for women's leadership and participation in disarmament processes and for the universalization of the TPNW.

I thank you.

