

Introductory Statement

By
Hon. Alhaji Moijue E. Kaikai
Minister of Social Welfare, Gender and Children's Affairs and Leader of
Delegation

At the
57th Session of the Committee on the Convention of All forms of
Discrimination against Women

On
Consideration of the sixth periodic Report of the Republic of Sierra Leone in
pursuance of its obligation under Article 18 of the Convention for the
Elimination of All forms of Discrimination Against Women

Geneva, Switzerland

February 19, 2014

Madam Chair,
Distinguished Members of the Committee,
Distinguished Delegates,
Ladies and Gentlemen

Let me express how delighted and honoured I am to head a delegation that is looking forward to discuss with the Committee the 6th periodic report of the Republic of Sierra Leone. My delegation will present snap shot report on the status of women within the period under review as it relates to the implementation of the Convention and to adequately respond to your questions. At this juncture, let me convey greetings from the government under the leadership of His Excellency the President Dr. Ernest Bai Koroma and people of Sierra Leone.

Madam Chair we feel gratified for this opportunity to give account of the status of women in Sierra Leone and policies put in place for the implementation of the Convention.

Let me first of all acknowledge the immense support that the Ministry received in putting together this report. Let me thank the government of the Republic of Sierra Leone and the United Nations Country Team in Sierra Leone for their diverse contributions to the writing the 6th periodic report on CEDAW.

The Ministry also acknowledges the financial and technical support of the United Nations Country Team in Sierra Leone. With the support of the UNWOMEN Country and Regional Office, a joint work plan between the Ministry of Social Welfare, Gender and Children's Affairs for writing of the 6th periodic CEDAW report was developed. The UN continued to provide financial and technical support throughout the process.

The Government of Sierra Leone, especially our President Dr. Ernest Bai Koroma and his cabinet, must be commended for their commitment to women's empowerment. The Government provided the first grant for the writing of this report and the various line ministries, departments and agencies have followed the process to its final conclusion, including review of the list of issues and questions raised by the Committee of Experts and responses collated by the Ministry on behalf of the government and people of Sierra Leone. We should have come with a very big delegation but be that as it may they eagerly await the concluding comments of this Committee for necessary action. Sierra Leone's Permanent Mission to the United Nations is also acknowledged for their interest and support for us to comply with our reporting obligation.

Madam Chair, you may recall that Sierra Leone as a State Party made a commitment on the 17th May 2007 in New York to fulfill its reporting obligations in a timely manner which is why our 6th report was officially submitted to the CEDAW Secretariat in 2011.

Stages in the Preparation of the Report

Multi-stakeholders Workshop: As a first step to the 6th CEDAW reporting process, the Ministry of Social Welfare, Gender, and Children's Affairs requested and got support from

the United Nations Division for the Advancement of Women (DAW), among others, to initiate the process of preparing the 6th CEDAW report. A multi-stakeholders workshop was organized on the 18th and 19th May 2009 in Bintumani Hotel, Freetown. The objective of the Workshop, among others, was to brainstorm with MDAs, Civil Society, UN Agencies and other stakeholders involved with the implementation of the CEDAW, and to assist the Ministry to set the stage for the preparation of the 6th CEDAW report.

Establishment of the CEDAW Secretariat: Following the multi-stakeholders workshop, a private CEDAW Consultant was hired and tasked to set up the Secretariat. The Secretariat was established in the Ministry of Social Welfare, Gender, and Children's Affairs. The key tasks of the Secretariat were to: a) work with the key stakeholders to identify and establish Technical Working Groups for the preparation of relevant reports on the various Articles; b) to facilitate, coordinate, monitor, and supervise the CEDAW reporting process; c) to consolidate the reports and inputs provided by the various Technical Working Groups.

Commissioning of the CEDAW Report Writing Process: As a first step, the reporting process was commissioned. The launching served as a means to sensitize the general population on the reporting process, to solicit the full cooperation of the authorities in the MDAs, and to agree on timelines for the various aspects of the work.

Commissioning of major studies: A Legal Consultant was contracted to provide adequate responses to the paragraphs in the Concluding comments that touch on and concern legal issues. Secondly, to explain the legal and practical measures undertaken since the last report to date and to give effect to the provisions of the Convention and the progress made in ensuring enjoyment of the Convention by the people subject to its jurisdiction.

Statistics Sierra Leone was commissioned to generate key primary data relevant to some of the Articles all over the country.

Establishment of CEDAW Steering Committee

A CEDAW Steering Committee was established comprising of representatives from government departments, UN Agencies, and Civil Society Groups. The Committee worked with the CEDAW Secretariat to provide direction and support to the reporting process. Additionally, particular MDAs especially Health, Education, Foreign Affairs & International Cooperation, Agriculture, Labour & Social Security participated in the upgrading of the various Articles including responding to the concerns in the Concluding Comments.

Technical Peer Reviews: Representatives from government departments, UN Agencies, Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), and Academia were asked to review the draft

report especially to ascertain the data/information contained in the respective sections of the report.

Validations: A National Validation workshop was held in Freetown on the 18th and 19th May 2011, which was attended by a cross section of key stakeholders nationwide and facilitated by a retired UN CEDAW Experts.

Domestication of the Convention

The following measures have been undertaken by the Ministry of Social Welfare, Gender and Children's Affairs:

- The development of the National Gender Strategic Plan (2010 – 2013) which has six priority areas including capacity building and management; women's participation in governance; empowerment of women and girls especially economic, education and agriculture; sexual reproductive health rights including gender-based violence; documentation, ICT and research; and gender budgeting and accountability. In 2012, the Ministry with support from UNICEF undertook a mid-term review of the implementation of the gender strategic plan.
- The development of the Sierra Leone National Action Plan (SiLNAP) on United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 and 1820. Sierra Leone became the fourth country in Africa and 17th worldwide to have developed a National Action on these resolutions. SiLNAP was showcased on the 4th March 2010 in one of the side events during the Commission on the Status of Women in New York. Sierra Leone National Action Plan (SiLNAP) has Five Pillars including:
 1. Prevention of conflict including violence against women/children (SGBV)
 2. Protection, empowerment of victims/vulnerable persons especially women and girls
 3. Prosecute, punish perpetrators effectively and safeguard women/girls' human rights to protection (during and post-conflict) as well as rehabilitate Victims/Survivors of SGBV and perpetrators.
 4. Participation and representation of women
 5. Promote coordination of the implementation process including resource mobilization, monitoring and evaluation of and reporting on the Sierra Leone National Action Plan

These Pillars reflect priority issues of women's needs and concerns from a gender perspective. They encompass outcome and output objectives, strategies, activities and relevant indicators. There are five outcome objectives, fourteen output objectives and thirty-five indicators. In our drive to get a doable Sierra Leone National Action Plan (SiLNAP), UNFPA and UNIFEM (now UNWOMEN) supported a workshop to sharpen the indicators of the Action Plan. What came out clearly was a thorough review of priorities in the area of the objectives, activities and indicators of the draft plan. Another activity was tailored to inform and lobby Parliamentarians to support the process and make commitment to its approval and application. The occasion was climaxed by a shared vision with members of Parliament to facilitate and respond to women's urgent demand to translate the UN 1325 with practical intervention particularly at constituency

level. Since then, the Sierra Leone Parliament remains engaged and committed to the implementation of the SiLNAP.

- To ensure its effective implementation, my Ministry partnered with the Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development, National Organization of Women and the Global Network of Women Peacebuilders to develop guidelines for integration of the two sister resolutions especially SiLNAP in local council development plans.
- The Ministry with support from UNIFEM (now UNWOMEN) articulated a proposal for the peacebuilding fund and the Ministry received eight hundred and two thousand United States Dollars (\$ 802, 000 USD). It contributed to the capacity development of the Ministry and its partners.
- The Ministry in collaboration with the National Committee on Gender-Based Violence (NaC-GBV) in 2008 developed the Strategic Roll-Out Plan for the implementation of the three ‘Gender Justice Laws’ namely the Registration of Customary Marriage and Divorce Act 2009; Devolution of Estates Act 2007; and the Domestic Violence Act 2007. The strategic roll-out plan looked at three main sections: enforcement; public education; and monitoring and data collection.
- In 2012, the government of Sierra Leone passed into a robust legislation on Sexual Offences. This legislation is regarded as one of the toughest laws around the world in addressing sexual violence related cases and it is in line with the United Nations Security Council Resolution 1820 and optional protocols to child prostitution, CEDAW among others. Following the passage of the Sexual Offences Act, 2012 which came into force on the 1st day of November, 2012, the Family Support Unit (F.S.U) of the Sierra Leone Police has investigated about 6,805 matters nationwide from January-September, 2013. Out of this number, 1,040 were charged to the Magistrate Court for Preliminary Investigations and 363 were committed to the High Court for trial.
- In the same 2012 two related documents developed by the Ministry of Social Welfare, Gender and Children’s Affairs namely the National Action Plan on Gender-Based Violence and the National Referral Protocol on Gender-Based Violence. The Referral Protocol on GBV has been rolled out in Kambia, Bonthe, Kenema, Bo and Freetown, as a result the collaboration and coordination of the different service providers has strongly increased (at least in Kambia and Bonthe). The Ministry is collaborating with IRC and UNICEF to roll-out the protocol all over the country.
- To address the menace of sexual gender-based violence, the Judiciary introduced the Saturday courts especially for SGBV matters which is yielding dividend.
- To promote the advancement of women especially the rural women who find themselves in the informal sector, government through the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Food Security established functional agricultural business centres (ABCs) to enhance productivity. Most of the ABCs in the 149 chiefdoms across the country are headed by females.
- Government is committed to strengthening the national machinery for women to address the staffing and budgetary allocations. Government through the Public

Services Commission has commenced the recruitment process of thirty three senior staff for the Ministry of Social Welfare, Gender and Children's Affairs. On the budgetary allocation a steady increase has been witnessed since the last reporting from 0.9% to 1.2% of the national budget. The Ministry organized gender mainstreaming workshop in 2013 where all the MDAs were trained and gender focal points have been appointed. Government has set aside special budget for women and empowerment fund

- The twin policies namely: National Policy on Gender Mainstreaming and the National Policy on the Advancement of Women are being reviewed and it will be merged into a single policy titled Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment. The drafting of this policy is at an advanced stage.

Agenda for Prosperity (PRSP III)

The government of Sierra Leone under the leadership of His Excellency the President Dr. Ernest Bai Koroma after successful implementation of the Agenda for Change (PRSP II) has developed the Agenda for Prosperity (PRSP III) from 2013 – 2018. The Agenda for Prosperity is the framework for the implementation of all developmental activities within the next five years. In his forward message to the Agenda for Prosperity, His Excellency the President Dr. Ernest Bai Koroma stated that: *“we need to build the much needed infrastructure, including the new mainland airport, railway, roads and ICT capabilities; provide a social safety net for the vulnerable population; promote good governance; ensure that the public sector is capacitated to deliver; empower our women and ensure equal opportunities for both men and women; and above all, we need to maintain our zero tolerance to corruption, and provide the enabling environment for the private sector to thrive. My Government is committed to accelerating the eradication of hunger and malnutrition, with a strengthened focus on women and children from conception to two years of age, to prevent the irreversible effects of stunting. We will establish a multi-sectoral nutrition coordination secretariat to address these issues”*.

The Agenda for Prosperity has eight pillars which include:

Pillar I: Diversified Economic Growth;

Pillar II: Managing Natural Resources

Pillar III: Accelerating Human Development

Pillar IV: Promoting International Competitiveness

Pillar V: Labour and Employment

Pillar VI: Social Protection

Pillar VII: Governance and Public Sector Reform

Pillar VIII: Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment.

The Government of Sierra Leone employed two prong approaches to promote gender equality and the advancement of women through the Agenda for Prosperity. It ensured a standalone pillar on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment whilst mainstreaming gender in the remaining seven pillars. The overall goal of pillar eight is to “empower

women and girls through education, participation in decision-making, and access to equal justice and economic opportunities by 2018". The programme will focus on four thematic areas with the following objectives:

- a. To increase women's participation and representation in decision-making in public, private, and traditional institutions.
- b. To reduce socio-economic barriers in education, and provide support for formal and non-formal institutions.
- c. To strengthen prevention and response mechanisms to violence against women and girls.
- d. To improve and make conducive the business environment for women, through greater access to finance and capacity development

The flagship projects in the Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment Pillar include: the development and legislation of a Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment policy and Bill to include the minimum 30% quota for women in governance; the establishment of a Women's Commission; Reduction of Teenage Pregnancy through the implementation of the National Strategy for the reduction of teenage pregnancy.; establishment of a women's empowerment fund among others. On the question of the policy and legislation of the Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment, the Ministry has received concurrence from the Attorney General and Minister of Justice.

Legal Reforms

Since the presentation of the initial, 2nd – 5th periodic CEDAW report in New York on the 17th May 2007, several legal reforms have been made. On the 7th June 2007 the government of Sierra Leone passed into the Child Rights Act; on the 14th June 2007 Sierra Leone Parliament passed into law the three "Gender Justice Laws" namely the Registration of Customary Marriage and Divorce Act, the Domestic Violence Act and the Devolution of Estates Act. Parliament also legislated the Chieftaincy Act of 2009 and the Sexual Offences Act on the 23rd August 2012. The government of Sierra Leone is pleased to report that these legal reforms have changed lives of women especially those in the rural areas. To ensure the full implementation of these laws, the government has developed the National Action Plan on Gender-Based Violence; the National Referral Protocol on Gender-Based Violence which was signed Ministers of government including Health, Education, Local Government, Justice, Finance, NGO coordinating body, and my immediate predecessor. To ensure that these laws are widely popularized, my Ministry coordinated the development of simplified versions and implementation strategies.

Another landmark legislation which the government is focusing on is the Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment Bill as soon as it goes through the crucible of Cabinet and onward tabling in Parliament for enactment.

As discussed during the constructive dialogue between the government and the Committee of Experts on the 17th May 2007, your attention was brought to the review of

the 1991 Constitution. The recommendations of the review were submitted to His Excellency the President Dr. Ernest Bai Koroma in 2008. His Excellency the President examined the recommendations but realized that the Committee fell short of his expectation in the review and therefore requested that second review be done using the recommendations as an essential guide and baseline. It is expected that the recommendation to repeal section 27 (4) (d) and (e) will be seriously considered. An eighty (80) Constitutional Review Committee has been appointed and the review process officially launched by the President and the Committee is expected to finish work in 2015.

The recommendations for the Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment Bill include a wide range of temporary special measures / affirmative action to improve the de facto equality. Please have a closer list at the submitted lists of recommendations. Among those are: 30% quota in political positions, 30% women in all levels of the judiciary, preferential treatment of women in the armed forces and civil service for recruitment, training and promotion, free education upon completion of SSS for female pupils, a toll-free 'freedom line' for victims of trafficking is mentioned. The agreement for a toll-free GBV line however is not included as trafficking is also GBV; we are concerned if there is a duplication of efforts, if this freedom line is really becoming operational or if the two concepts have already been merged.

The issue female genital cutting comes up as an issue during any constructive dialogue. Government and its partners are making every effort to address this issue. In the Agenda for Prosperity, government in consultation with the practitioners (soweis) has agreed to promulgate legislation on underage initiation. As you may be aware, Sierra Leone is on Constitutional Review and the National Soweis Council has recommended that legislation on underage initiation be included in the revised Constitution. It is also expected to be in the Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment Policy and Bill.

Women in Decision –Making

Our government continues to make a steady progress in the area of decision making positions for women in governance at all levels. I must confess that on the average government has not met the minimum 30% representation at all levels but we are happy to report that progress is made in that direction. At the Local Council level, in 2004 we had 10.9 % for females, 2008 we recorded 18.9% females and in 2012 we recorded 19.1% females. In fact the Makeni City Council, the Mayor and Deputy Mayor are females whilst the council has 8 female councillors and 8 male councilors. We have however witnessed stagnation in the numbers of female Parliamentarians and female Cabinet Ministers and their deputies. Let me also inform the Committee that His Excellency the President has made several appointments of women in key governance positions. I usually refer to them as the 'Generals Club' established by President Koroma. They include but not limited to the Commissioner General of National Revenue Authority, Administrator and Registrar General, Director General of the Sierra Leone Roads Authority, Solicitor General, Auditor General, Chief Justice, Brigadier General, Chairperson for Environmental Protection Agency, Head of Electoral Commission and several more as chairpersons of various

parastatals. At the sub-regional level, Sierra Leone Government nominated the first ever female Deputy Secretary General of the Mano River Union and advocated for the appointment of a female Secretary General for the Mano River Union comprising of Sierra Leone, Liberia, Guinea and Cote D'Ivoire. The number of women in the Judiciary is increasing following the appointment of a woman as Chief Justice. In the Supreme Court, out of five judges, two of them are women i.e the Chief Justice herself, Umu Hawa Tejan-Jalloh and Virginia Wright. JSC

In the Court of Appeal, out of six judges, three are women including Justice Vivian E. Solomon, Justice Mrs. Showers and Justice Mrs. Nyawo-Jones. In the High Court, out of ten judges, four of them are women including Justice Musu Kamara, Justice Dwazark, Justice Nyawo-Jones and Justice V.E. Solomon.

Eliminating Gender Disparity in Education

Government has made tremendous effort to ensure the elimination of gender disparity in the education sector. During the presentation of the initial, 2nd – 5th periodic report on CEDAW, government mentioned about the temporary special measure in the education sector which free girl child education as far as to basic education level in the Northern and Eastern Provinces. Government is delighted to inform the Committee that this affirmative action has been extended to the Southern and Western Regions of the country including paying for public examinations like the NPSE, BECE and WASSCE among others. Furthermore, girls and women studying the sciences are opportune to get scholarship at the tertiary level. The 2010 scorecard for the achievement of the millennium development goals suggest that Sierra Leone is on track to achieve it by 2015.

To address the low level of enrolment of girls in the senior secondary schools in Sierra Leone, government has put in place several measures including addressing the issue of teenage pregnancy, access to educational institutions within close radius and the Agenda for Prosperity is set to extend free tuition for girls in the senior secondary school level.

Women and Health

The healthcare service delivery for women and girls keeps improving and government will continue to do more. During the presentation of the initial 2nd – 5th periodic report, Sierra Leone was noted among the countries in the world with one of the highest maternal mortality. Government has introduced and officially launched the free health care for pregnant women, lactating mothers and children under five on the 27th April 2010 and this has contributed to the drastic reduction of maternal and child mortality rates. There has been significant reduction in maternal mortality ratio from 1800/100,000 live births in 2001 (Joint WB, UNFPA, UNICEF and WHO Report) and 1,300/100,000 live births (MICS 2005) to 857/100,000 live births (DHS 2008). There is an amendment to the HIV Prevention Act and control Act of 2007 which states that there is a crime of offence for women to give births to an HIV child. In Section 12 and 21 this has been change to read” that a woman have done no wrong in delivering an HIV baby”.

His Excellency the President of Sierra Leone, Dr. Ernest Bai Koroma in his vision to improve the health of woman and children in Sierra Leone, declared during the launching

of the Health Sector Strategic Plan, his ambition of improving the lives of women and children. The National Health Strategic Plan (2010-2015) provides a common strategic framework that guides all interventions by partners at all levels of the national health system.

On the question of free medical examination and treatment for survivors of GBV, some districts with support from development partners and council development plan has set resources to provide such service for the victims or survivors. The Ministry of Social Welfare, Gender and Children's Affairs in collaboration with Ministry of Health and Sanitation and UNICEF has sensitized senior medical practitioners from all over the country for such services.

The Termination of Pregnancy Bill is currently with the Law Reform Commission and once the drafting is complete government is prepared to engage the populace through nationwide consultations towards its enactment.

Rural Women

During the dialogue session for the initial, 2nd – 5th periodic CEDAW report, the Committee of Experts in their concluding comments mentioned that there was limited data in the report especially on rural women. The 2002 Statistics Act made provision for the collection of gender disaggregated data. To implement the provisions of the Act, Statistics Sierra Leone posted Statisticians to various line ministries including the Ministry of Social Welfare, Gender and Children's Affairs. During the writing of the 6th periodic report, Statistics Sierra Leone played a pivotal role in the data generation especially for articles including employment, social and economic rights and rural women.

Madam Chair, may I conclude by introducing the members of the Sierra Leone Delegation who are prepared to interact with you on the report.

1. H.E. Madam Yvette Stevens, Ambassador & Permanent Representative of Sierra Leone to the UN
2. Ms. Naasu Fofanah, Gender Adviser, Office the President
3. Mr. Monfred Momoh Sesay, Ministry of Justice - member
4. Dr. Sarian Kamara, Ministry of Health and Sanitation – member
5. Hon. Moiwai Momoh, Member of Sierra Leone Parliament - member
6. Mr. Charles Vandj, Ministry of Social Welfare, Gender and Children's Affairs – member

And I am Moijue E. Kaikai, Minister of Social Welfare, Gender and Children's Affairs and leader of Delegation.

I thank you.