

Joint Communiqué

All Peoples Congress and Sierra Leone People's Party

Keenly aware of our joint responsibility for the consolidation of peace in Sierra Leone and for advancing its development as well as for preventing the mistakes of the past that have brought so much suffering to our fellow compatriots, the two largest parties in the country, the All Peoples Congress (APC) and the Sierra Leone's Peoples Party (SLPP) have come together to overcome recent differences, to help quell all forms of political violence and to speed the country's progress towards peaceful development. The recent spate of violence in the country has already caused alarm in the minds of Sierra Leonean citizens and tarnished the international image of Sierra Leone.

Against the backdrop of the recent events, and cognizant of our obligation to abide by the principles stipulated in the Code of Conduct for Political Parties signed by all political parties on 20 October 2006, we stand together in upholding the Rule of Law and maintaining the core principle of democracy, of free debate over alternative policies and views in an atmosphere of mutual respect. We pledge to work jointly in preventing all forms of political incitement, provocation and intimidation that could lead to a recurrence of the disturbances witnessed in March 2009. While we must learn from our painful historical experiences, we maintain that we should not be haunted by those memories; instead we commit ourselves to building a peaceful, democratic and prosperous Sierra Leone for the benefit of all of our people.

In this spirit and following a series of UN sponsored consultations and bi-party dialogues, the leadership of both parties represented here by an APC delegation led by its Administrative Chairman and Secretary General and an SLPP delegation headed by its Chairman and Secretary General have agreed to uphold the following undertakings pertaining to the relations between our two parties, taking account of a number of concerns that are important for the future of our country:

1. Both parties recognize the important roles and responsibilities that both the governing and opposition parties have to play in a democratic dispensation, and reiterate that only the people of Sierra Leone can choose their government in free and fair elections. The opposition party accepts the overall authority of the State within the Constitution and that of the institution of the elected President of the Republic as well as the Law, while the governing party accepts the special responsibility of the State in providing adequate security to the opposition parties including its leaders

and properties as well as political space to the opposition party to undertake legitimate party activities.

2. Both parties join together in denouncing all forms of violence and in particular recent acts of political violence and intolerance. Without prejudice to any investigations conducted by the Sierra Leone Police and other law enforcement agencies, both parties agree to recommend to the President to authorize the speedy conduct of an Independent Review into the incidents that occurred in Gendema, Pujehun District, Freetown and Kenema during the month of March 2009 and that both parties will be consulted on the terms of reference (TOR) and the composition of the Independent Review. In consonance with the statement made by President Ernest Bai Koroma on 17 March 2009, we further agree that those who will be proven to have committed acts of violence will be brought to justice, irrespective of their real or alleged political affiliation. Both parties ask the UN to provide technical assistance to the Review process.

3. Both parties condemn, categorically, any form of violence against women, in particular sexual violence directed against women as a form of political, ethnic or other means of intimidation. We recognize that rape is a serious crime and both parties stand together in calling on the Government to prosecute the perpetrators of such heinous and dishonorable acts and ensure that they face the full penalty of the law. Both parties shall collaborate to strengthen relevant institutions, including civil and religious societies that deal with such kinds of violence. Both parties agree to recommend to the President the establishment of a separate Independent Enquiry to investigate all allegations of rape and sexual violence against women at the SLPP headquarters on 16 of March 2009 and to bring to justice anyone who has committed sexual violence against women and to consult with both parties on its TOR and composition. Both parties request the UN to provide technical assistance to the Enquiry process.

4. Both parties agree on the important role of the Sierra Leonean Police in upholding the rule of law and in maintaining peace and security throughout the country. Both parties agree on the need to maintain the operational independence and impartiality of the police and to work together on improving the professionalism of and the respect for the Sierra Leonean Police as a national institution. In this spirit, both parties further agree to recommend to the Government to speed up existing plans for the establishment of an Independent Police Complaints Board. Both parties call on the international community to assist in the establishment of the Independent Police Complaints Board as well as to provide international assistance for the training and equipping of the Sierra Leonean Police, in particular in enhancing its capacity to deal more effectively with civil disturbances without resort to the use of any lethal force.

5. Both parties agree on the need to further strengthen democratic institutions. In particular, both parties agree on the need to strengthen the

capacity of the Parliament in fulfilling its roles of conducting open and informed debates on all issues of national importance, of approving laws and in discharging its constitutional duties. Both parties recognize the independence of the Judiciary and pledge to extend their cooperation to this branch of government in further strengthening the integrity and professionalism of these important branches of government. Equally, both parties agreed to work together to enhance the respective roles and responsibilities and to respect the independence of important democratic institutions such as the National Electoral Commission (NEC), the Political Parties Registration Commission (PPRC), the National Human Rights Commission (HRC), the Anti-Corruption Commission and the Independent Media Commission (IMC).

6. Without prejudice to the constitutional prerogatives and authority of the President of the Republic to nominate candidates of his choice to head important independent democratic institutions, both parties recommend as a confidence building measure that consultations be held with the opposition parties before the names of such candidates are submitted to the Parliament for confirmation.

7. Both parties recognize the importance of freedom of speech and the role of the media in a democratic society and agree that the question of the lifting of the ban on the operation of the two party radio stations should be dealt with by the Independent Media Commission. Nonetheless, they are also cognizant of the latent dangers that party-owned radio stations could pose in a developing country that has just emerged from brutal civil war. Both parties agree, therefore, to work together in establishing an independent public broadcasting corporation for Sierra Leone that operates on the basis of internationally accepted standards and gives equal access to the views and arguments of all political parties.

8. Both parties recognize the dangers that heightened regional and ethnic divisions could pose to the peace and stability in Sierra Leone and stress the need to function as truly national parties that embrace all aspects of Sierra Leone's rich and diverse social fabric, irrespective of the genesis of their evolution. Both sides will, therefore, strive to maintain regional balance in the membership and representation of their respective parties as well as within State institutions. Both parties agree to ensure unimpeded access to all affiliates of any party to all parts of the country, irrespective of political, geographical or ethnic considerations.

9. Both parties recognize the problem of youth unemployment and, if not solved, the risk that this could pose for peace and stability in Sierra Leone. Both parties re-affirm their commitment to disband all so-called youth task forces or any other militant youth groups and to refrain from inciting their respective party youth wings. In this spirit, both parties agree to organize joint events and other confidence-building measures between their respective party youth wings and to develop a bi-partisan approach to

overcome youth unemployment and to work together in implementing various programmes that benefit Sierra Leone's young men and women from an idle into a productive force of society.

10. Both parties underscore the need to make further efforts to integrate ex-combatants into society and undertake to refrain from engaging ex-combatants or any other similar elements of society in party politics or in State institutions without any due process of reorientation, training and diligent selection. Both parties agree to work together to abolish the use of war-like nicknames by any of their followers that are intimidating and reminiscent of the brutal civil war.

11. Both parties realize the enormous threats that international trafficking in illicit drugs poses for the Sierra Leone's social integrity and security. They are keenly aware that this is an external attack on the nation that can only be overcome if all Sierra Leoneans close ranks in combating this threat. Both parties pledge, therefore, to work together and develop a bi-partisan approach to develop policies and programmes aimed at keeping Sierra Leone free of illicit drug trafficking and consumption.

12. Both parties recognize the need for multi-party talks in order to build up consensus on critical issues of national interest and reduce tensions. They agree to regular multi-party talks to be held not only in Freetown but also in the regional centers of Makeni, Bo and Kenema. These talks are to be chaired by the Political Parties Registration Commission (PPRC) and the Executive Representative of the Secretary General will be invited to act as co-chair. The co-chairpersons, in consultation with leaders of the registered political parties, will propose the agenda for those meetings.

13. Both parties thank the international community for standing behind the Sierra Leonean people, for having sacrificed so much in blood and treasure, and for providing the human and material resources to bring peace to this country. We call on all our international partners to continue in their generous support to Sierra Leone, especially in these trying times of the global economic crisis.

14. Both parties agree to call on the political parties that did not take part in the bi-party meetings leading to the adoption of this Joint Communiqué to cooperate with the two political parties in the realization of the undertakings specified above.

15. In accordance with paragraph 22 of the Code of Conduct of the Political Parties, a Committee chaired by the Political Parties Registration Commission with the Executive Representative of the Secretary General of UNIPSIL as Co-Chair and comprising of representatives of the political parties, the Sierra Leone Police, two representatives from civil society, one representative of the National Commission for Democracy and one from the

Inter-Religious Council shall ensure adherence to the agreements contained in this Joint Communiqué

16. Both parties agree to deposit jointly the Joint Communiqué with the Parliament of Sierra Leone and call on the Executive Representative of the Secretary General to convey this Joint Communiqué to the Secretary-General of the United Nations, the United Nations Peacebuilding Commission and the United Nations Security Council.

Signed in the presence of

**The President of the Republic
H.E. Dr. Ernest Bai Koroma**

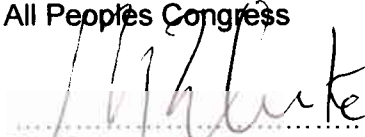
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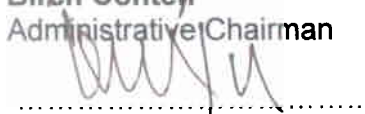
Members of the Diplomatic Corps:

High Commissioners of the Federal Republic of Nigeria and the United Kingdom; Ambassadors of the Peoples Republic of China, the European Union and the United States of America as well as the Charge d'Affairs of Ghana and the Federal Republic of Germany

Freetown, Thursday, the 2nd of April of the year 2009

For the
All Peoples Congress


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Birch Conteh
Administrative Chairman



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Victor B. Foh
Secretary-General

For the
Sierra Leone People's Party


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John O. Benjamin
Chairman


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Jacob J. Saffa
Secretary-General

Witnessed by


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Michael von der Schulenburg
Executive Representative of the Secretary General