

STAMENT BY SIERRA LEONE AT THE 2MSP IN BEIRUT – 12-16 SEPTEMBER, 2011

Madam President, allow me to express my delegation's appreciation of legendary Lebanese hospitality, exemplified by the warm welcome we received at the airport, and which we continue to receive at the Phoenicia.

On behalf of the government and people of Sierra Leone, I wish to congratulate Ambassador Dr. Adnan Mansour on his election as president of the 2MSP and convey our best wishes of the government and people to Lebanon for taking up the challenge to host this meeting, and to diligently live up to the huge expectation that usually comes with hosting.

Madam President, Sierra Leone celebrated her golden jubilee on April 27 this year; a celebration of our resilience and determination as a nation, and a reflection on the terrible days in which many lives and limbs were lost during a decade of painful conflict, some by the criminal use of cluster bombs as an instrument of death.

Madam President, Sierra Leone has always pursued peaceful co-existence with all states through bi-lateral and multi-lateral cooperation. It is an established fact that Sierra Leone has never produced, stockpiled, transferred or used cluster bombs. However, we have experienced the horror these munitions of death and suffering pose, a weapon which has a sole intent and purpose to cause harm and suffering to civilians, especially women and children, in blatant disregard for human lives and

in flagrant contravention of the laws of war. We wish to therefore reaffirm our belief in peace, security and the dignity of all persons.

We share the grief and sorrow of Lebanon and indeed all victims of cluster bombs, and condemn any act, either by commission or omission, that violates the CCM, including their recent reported use, as a means to terrorize, and deprive people of the right to life and access to their land, both fundamental elements of universal freedoms.

On this note, Madam President, Sierra Leone wishes to restate her commitment to a cluster munitions convention that is universal in application, strong in enforcement and above all offers sustainable support, comfort and hope to victims by restoring their dignity, and enhancing their humanity through effective and efficient victim assistance, and a shared commitment toward zero new victims.

My government played an active role in the process of making cluster munitions history. We are proud of our contribution, not least being the first country in Africa to sign and ratify the convention in Oslo in 2008. We have followed this pioneering feat by aligning with other like-minded states to adopt the Vientiane Action Plan and submit our first transparency report, in compliance with Article 7 of the CCM.

We wish to emphasise our commitment to a world free of cluster bombs, and pledge to promulgate a comprehensive national legislation prohibiting future possession, purchase, and use of cluster munitions that

cause unacceptable harm to civilians. In that vein, we are grateful to the governments of the United Kingdom and the United States for helping us clear traceable remnants of cluster bombs, landmines, and to have trained our army engineers in the clearance of contaminated areas.

Madam President, in conclusion, Sierra Leone wishes to commit itself to the Beirut Declaration and we call on all states to “Join the Team” by acceding to, and ratifying the Convention on Cluster munitions.

I THANK YOU.