

**SIERRA LEONE**

**19th Session of the Universal Periodic Review**

Democratic Republic of Congo

**STATEMENT BY AMBASSADOR YVETTE STEVENS**

29 March 2014

Mr. President,

Sierra Leone thanks the delegation of the Democratic Republic of Congo for their report which outlines the impressive steps that have been taken to implement the recommendations of the first cycle of the Universal Periodic Review, and which offers insights into the challenges faced by the country as well as the efforts to address them.

Sierra Leone observes that there are 57 articles in the national Constitution which are dedicated to human rights. My delegation is particularly encouraged by the *de facto* moratorium on the death penalty and the efforts to combat torture and sexual violence through the establishment of normative frameworks.

Nevertheless, the situation in parts of the country remains dire. According to OCHA, in March of this year, over 2.6 million people are internally displaced in the country. While this is an 11% decrease from the 2013 figures, Sierra Leone is concerned by the impact internal conflict continues to have on North and South Kivu, Katanga and Orientale.

To conclude, Sierra Leone, would like to make the following recommendations:

* The DRC to take more effective measures to combat incidents of sexual violence and strengthen the legal frameworks which address impunity.
* The DRC should intensify its efforts to implement its reintegration and rehabilitation policies for victims of gender-based violence.
* The DRC should ensure its domestic legislation establishes universal jurisdiction over war crimes, especially with regard to the use of children in hostilities and sexual violence, including rape.

Sierra Leone wishes the DRC well in its quest for a stable and lasting peace, free of rebel forces intent on spreading fear and destruction.

Mr. President,

I thank you.