

**EMBASSY AND PERMANENT MISSION OF SIERRA LEONE**

**GENEVA, SWITZERLAND**

**HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL**

**Universal Periodic Review**

***03 – 14 May 2021***

**Adoption of the 38th Session of the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) Report for the Republic of Sierra Leone**

**H.E. Ambassador Lansana Gberie**

***Friday, 14 May 2021, 15:30 – 18:00***

**Thank you, Madam President.**

**Excellencies, Distinguished members of the Troika, Esteemed Delegates,**

Let me at the outset convey my personal congratulations to you, Madam President, both on your assumption of this year’s Presidency of the Human Rights Council, and for the labour and dedication you have already invested in these proceedings. I also congratulate all the members of your bureau and thank them for work on behalf of the Council and member states.

My delegation is most gratified by this opportunity to make a few remarks at the adoption of the recommendations from our Universal Periodic Review of my country’s Human Rights Report.

So let me begin by thanking the Council’s UPR Secretariat for the hard work put into the process, and the Troika members, namely China, Libya and Mexico, for their unflinching support and coordination through the successful presentation of the report and the compiling of the recommendations arising from it.

My Government values the UPR process and views it as an important forum for sharing our experiences and learning best practices from others in order to promote and safeguard the human rights of our peoples. We also appreciate the opportunity the process provides for discussing lingering challenges in the implementation of our human rights obligations.

We are grateful for this opportunity to present the progress we have achieved thus far in the promotion and protection of human rights in Sierra Leone.

**Madam President,**

I am confident that during this review of my country, the Council, as well as member and observer States, have received clear information about the legal and policy measures that Sierra Leone has undertaken in accordance with its human rights obligations under the relevant international agreements since the previous cycle. We were immensely pleased and grateful to listened to the many States who welcomed our progress and achievements in a number of areas, including reforms aimed at the protection of women and girls such as reversing policies that prevent pregnant girls from going back to school, passing the Sexual Offences (Amendment) Act of 2019, the ongoing work of the ‘Hands off our Girls’ campaign, our development of policies to promote gender equality and equal access for persons with disabilities, our efforts at strengthening the justice sector and equality before the law, and most recently, the decision by the President and his Cabinet to abolish death penalty. This decision awaits ratification by Parliament.

**Madam President,**

It is perhaps needless to add that we recognize that there is still room for improvement. As such, my delegation is thankful for the recommendations States have provided on many important issues, including improving the protection of the rights of vulnerable groups, particularly women, children, and persons with disabilities; undertaking further efforts to combat the trafficking in persons and gender-based violence; further improvement of public health and education, including with respect to FGM; and taking supplementary measures to strengthen gender equality.

The recommendations and comments raised during the review will play a valuable role in our future work around ensuring effective protection and promotion of human rights in the country.

**Madam President,**

Sierra Leone reaffirms its commitment to eliminating gender-based violence, promoting gender equality and empowerment of women, and we will strive to improve the lives of persons with disabilities across the country. Our Government is determined to continue pursuing legislative and judicial reforms, and to bridge the gaps in our legislative framework.

We thank all the States that participated in our review despite the challenging circumstances of the COVID-19 pandemic, particularly for providing positive and constructive recommendations in areas requiring our further attention. We appreciate the support that have been given by States and our development partners in the implementation of a number of the recommendations from our two previous reports. From the preparation of the National Report to the actual engagement during the review session, the third cycle of the UPR process has been an effective tool for my Government to assess positive developments and challenges it faces in relation to human rights and our own obligations thereto, and we look forward to the formal adoption of this year’s UPR recommendations.

We are happy to have engaged with 102 states during our third cycle review and received over 274 recommendations. These recommendations will be discussed by the Government within the context of our national legislations, socio-cultural norms, and implementation capabilities. We will provide our response in due time, but no later than the plenary of the Human Rights Council 48th Session commences in September 2021.

In conclusion, I would like to reiterate Sierra Leone’s commitment to continue our cooperation with the UN bodies, Special Procedures and mechanisms, and other stakeholders including civil society, in the implementation process of the UPR recommendations.

I thank you for your kind attention.

Thank you, Madam President