



SIERRA LEONE

STATEMENT

International Organization for Migration

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Mr Chairman,

Sierra Leone would like to start by associating itself with the statement made by Botswana, on behalf of the African Group. My delegation congratulates you and the entire Bureau for your election and expresses its gratitude to the outgoing Chair and Bureau for the outstanding achievements during their tenure of office. Sierra Leone welcomes the new member to IOM, Samoa, as well as the new observers.

My delegation would like to acknowledge work being done by IOM, under the able leadership of Ambassador William Swing, the Director General. Sierra Leone is particularly grateful to IOM for its programme of assistance to the country over the years, especially in the post-conflict phase.

To combat the scourge of trafficking in persons, the IOM has been working assiduously through projects, with the Government of Sierra Leone. Through the Peace Building Projects, the organization has been able to contribute to the rehabilitation of the prisons system, supported the capacity building of Parliament as well as the implementation of the Sierra Leone Reparations Programme.

Under the Diaspora Programme, the Organization is supporting the Human Resource and Capacity Development Programme through the temporary transfer of Sierra Leoneans from the Netherlands to support development of the country. It has also supported the establishment of the Labour Migration Unit at the Ministry of Labour and Social Security.

Through the IOM, Sierra Leone's Immigration Department has received significant capacity development of its staff including the introduction of Passenger Information Registration System (PIRS) at the country's main Airport and some border areas.

Mr Chairman,

As you know, Sierra Leone is currently facing the worst pandemic outbreak in its history. The Ebola outbreak in the border area of Guinea has been spread through, *inter alia*, the extensive movement of people within and across the borders of Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone. In addition, this cross border movement has complicated tracking and follow-up of contacts for monitoring and quarantine purposes. Furthermore, the Ebola crisis and if not contained, has the potential to create population displacement on a large scale.

In response to the call to the international community to provide assistance in the containment of the disease, IOM is currently implementing the Health Humanitarian Border Management project at the Freetown International Airport in Lungi.

IOM has signed an MOU with the DFID, to support the training Academy for frontline Ebola response practitioners. IOM has recently deployed a Senior Official, a Sierra Leonean to Freetown as the Public Health Advisor to the IOM Ebola response programmes. She is currently campaigning actively to convince other members of the diaspora to come for short term to work on IOM projects.

We would like to urge IOM to support our advocacy efforts to address stigmatization, which restrict the movement of all Sierra Leoneans worldwide. While we appreciate the fear associated with the disease, we must go by the science, NOT fear.

Mr Chairman,

Sierra Leone believes that “a friend in need is a friend indeed.” IOM has indeed proven itself to be a friend of Sierra Leone, in its manifestations and support to the country, for which we are most grateful.

Before closing this statement, Mr Chairman, Sierra Leone would like to congratulate the Director General for his comprehensive report. We note the global migration trends highlighted in the report and agree that there is a need to change the current negative migration narrative. The more active showcasing of the achievements of accomplished migrants within their receiving countries would go a long way in this regard.

Finally, my delegation would like to reiterate the importance of migration for development. Sierra Leone lost a large per cent of its highly qualified personnel during the war and these persons are providing valuable services abroad.

While not all of them would volunteer to return, for various reasons, most, if not all are providing resources to their country, through remittances. Charges on remittances are high and we do appreciate the efforts being made by IOM to address this. Many Sierra Leonean migrants can as well provide temporary expertise to the country and we thank IOM for encouraging and supporting these efforts.

In closing, we would like to express our appreciation of the work accomplished by the IOM Office in Sierra Leone and look forward to working closely with IOM in ending this Ebola scourge and in the implementation of the *Agenda for Prosperity*, our blueprint for development.

Mr. Chairman,

I thank you.