

**PGA REGIONAL AFRICA WORKSHOP TO PROMOTE RATIFICATION
AND IMPLEMENTATION OF
THE BIOLOGICAL AND TOXIN WEAPONS CONVENTION (BTWC)**

*Monday May 27,
Parliament House
Freetown, Sierra Leone*

**Opening remarks by
Mr. Sunil Saigal
United Nations Resident Coordinator**

Honourable Deputy Speaker of Parliament,

Honourable Leader of the Minority and Vice-President of the Panafrican
Parliament.

Honourable Vice-Chair of the PGA, Sierra Leone

Honourable Members of Parliament of Sierra Leone and visiting
Members of Parliament,

Director of Peace & Democracy Programme, PGA

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is my great pleasure to be with you today, as we gather to open
this workshop to promote the ratification and implementation of the
Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention, the first multilateral
disarmament treaty banning an entire category of weapons of mass

destruction. I congratulate Parliamentarians for Global Action (PGA) on having organized the workshop, and I congratulate the Parliament of Sierra Leone on hosting it.

Je voudrais particulièrement souhaiter la bienvenue en Sierra Leone à ceux et à celles qui sont venus de loin pour rejoindre cet atelier. Je me réjouis du grand nombre de pays de la région représentés ici aujourd'hui.

Three fundamental tenets, on which the United Nations builds its work, and which highlight the importance of treaties such as the BTWC, are that:

- there is 'no peace and security without development,'
- there is 'no development without peace and security,' and
- there is 'no peace and development without human rights.'

The convention recognizes that for the sake of all mankind, we must *exclude completely the possibility of biological agents and toxins being used as weapons. Such use would be repugnant to the conscience of mankind and no effort should be spared to minimise this risk.*

For Sierra Leone, as well as for other countries, peace and security are important pre-requisites for development. With the country making strides in recovering from the twin shocks of Ebola and collapse of commodity prices, we must ensure that the country builds back better, with a resilience to future challenges.

Just in the last year, we have seen this country make progress in several important results areas. A few examples:

- Work has begun on the installation of solar systems for 50 Community Health Centres, which will enable not only them but in the long term also the surrounding communities access to green energy;
- Ebola survivors are given support to be re-integrated in their communities, and receive livelihoods training;
- More than 25,000 young boys and girls have been given skills to protect them from abuse. Adolescent girls in particular are supported to protect their human rights, delaying age at marriage, preventing adolescent pregnancy and give them access to health services;
- 330 learning centres have been established in all 14 districts across the country.

These are but a few examples of how Sierra Leone is being built back better and stronger, but the future progress of this country, as of other developing countries, is still dependent on one thing – peace. By ensuring that Sierra Leone continues to be a safe place for all its citizens, it will be able to develop and grow. Part of this ensuring stable peace is the ratification and implementation of the BTWC.

On behalf of the United Nations family I therefore want to express our strong commitment to the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention and wish you all a productive workshop.

Thank you for your attention.