



PARLIAMENT OF SIERRA LEONE



STATEMENT PRESENTED

By

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WORKSHOP ON: “THE ROLE OF WOMEN PARLIAMENTARIANS IN ADDRESSING THE NON-PROLIFERATION OF WEAPONS OF MASS DESTRUCTION ORGANIZED BY THE PGA IN THE GAMBIA”.

Distinguished Parliamentarians, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I bring you greetings and felicitations from the people and government of the Republic of Sierra Leone and equally to express my sincere gratitude for inviting me to participate in this very important discussion in this Parliamentarian for Global Action (PGA) workshop held in the Gambia.

The Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC), which is the treaty that the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) is mandated to implement a comprehensive international agreement that completely outlaws an entire category of weapons of mass destruction. The Convention prohibits, without discrimination, the development, production, stockpiling, transfer, retention and use of chemical weapons, under conditions of strict international verification.

Under the oversight of the OPCW, 96 percent of the global stockpiles of chemical weapons have already been eliminated. An entire class of weapons of mass destruction is now at the threshold of being completely eradicated (UN Security Council Resolution 1540). This would be an unprecedented achievement in the history of non-proliferation endeavor of WMD. This means that our future efforts will focus mainly on measures to prevent the re-emergence of weapons of Mass Destructions.

The Convention creates obligations in the context of non-proliferation that broadly translate into two main areas: industry verification and data reporting on the one hand, and promulgation and enforcement of national legislation on the other.

Given the introductory nature of my remarks, I will focus mainly on the importance of national implementation and briefly on the important role of parliamentarians in the context of legislation but also as shapers of opinion in support of upholding and enforcing agreed norms with the singular purpose of

ensuring a world free of chemical weapons. Hence, the Sierra Leone Parliament supports, ratifies and implement a wide range of activities and programmes which support national implementation. The effectiveness of legislative and other regulatory measures and of the internal structures to administer them is critical to the enforcement of the Convention and the ability to prevent non-State actors from gaining access to materials that could aid in the development of chemical weapons.

The work of parliament and the OPCW complements directly the efforts of the United Nations to promote the implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 1540, which aims to prevent non-State actors from acquiring weapons of mass destruction. Compliance at the national level with the obligations of the Convention provides an effective means of preventing proliferation.

Criminalising activities that the Convention prohibits and establishing measures that would enforce those rules constitute the most effective deterrence against proliferation. Consequently, implementing legislation is critical and a key focus for the Sierra Leone Parliament and there is much to be done in this area.

Parliamentarians have a fundamental role to play in promoting ratification and implementation of international treaties that seek to prevent the usage, manufacture, development and proliferation of Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD). Considering the parliamentary prerogative powers of oversight and legislation at our disposal, especially we the female Parliamentarians, we are also extraordinarily well-placed to making decisive contributions in promoting the prevention and the non-proliferation of Weapons of Mass Destruction through our respective Parliaments and countries.

The commitment of female parliamentarians to non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction (WMD) is a fundamental interest of our country's foreign and

domestic policy. Sierra Leone does not possess nuclear, chemical or biological weapons or their means of delivery. It undertakes effective measures to reinforce the national export control regime and to strengthen oversight and monitoring of the flow of materials and equipment used in the development and manufacture of WMD.

All women decision-makers, be it in Government, Parliament or elsewhere that find ourselves in a position to mitigate these devastating threats, must do so with a great sense of purpose and an equal sense of urgency.

Let me briefly highlight the main issues and challenges encountered in our efforts to promote effective national and global implementation. Drafting, accepting, and approving national legislation is often a painstaking process and impacted by competing legislative priorities. It requires the governments to take action, to prepare a draft bill, submit it for the consideration of Parliament.

Also, the lack of support for Internship Programme for Legal Drafters and National Authority Representatives is another serious challenge.

As a result of the aforementioned challenges, the technical skills of the participants to enable them complete a draft of national implementing legislation is yet to be achieved.

On this backdrop, I am on behalf of my colleagues female parliamentarians therefore calling on the stakeholders in the fight against the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction to provide the requisite support to the female parliamentarians in Sierra Leone to achieve their dreams in this fight.

The Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) should continue to reach out to member countries to encourage them to participate in the

legislative support activities to enable them to develop comprehensive draft CWC-related laws.

While countries might consider other priorities as taking precedence, strong regulatory and enforcement action on our part will ensure that our territories cannot be used for prohibited activities which may harm our own interests or as potential trafficking routes.

The fundamental objective of disarmament and non-proliferation treaties is to prevent weapons of mass destruction from ever being used. Their elimination is of paramount importance. At the same time, preventing their re-emergence is equally vital. Reacting with unity against any breach of agreed norms is non-discretionary for sustaining the quest for global peace. Despite the remarkable progress made in eliminating chemical weapons, we know from recent experience that the menacing threat of their use has not disappeared.

A possible significant factor obstructing this non-proliferation vision is non-adherence by other States that remain outside the Convention. However, our acceptance of the Convention can help promote a climate of trust and will benefit regional and global security.

A truly universal Convention will impart even greater authority to measures against threats that affect all nations. We cannot afford the old habit of searching for peace after the trauma of war and trying to build something new all over again.

As a country, Sierra Leone is committed to the provisions of the convention to achieving this global call. We will continue to strengthen our commitment and use it to the fullest. This is not a responsibility of parliamentarians and diplomats

alone. In our complex world, people of goodwill everywhere must play their part individually and collectively through their representative bodies in society.

In this scheme, parliamentarians occupy an extremely important position. Our active participation and collective efforts in the area of international peace and security is critical.

I invite the distinguished Parliamentarians to take the necessary measures, in their respective countries, for a full and effective implementation of the Convention. This can only be achieved through a comprehensive legislation.

Weapons of mass destructions deserve to be tackled as a priority. In view of the complexity of the security environment, in particular the growing terrorist threat, it is primarily in the interest of parliaments in our member countries to ensure the effective implementation of the Chemical Weapons Convention.

Thank you