



Security Council

Fifty-fourth Year

4054th Meeting

Friday, 22 October 1999, 11.40 a.m.

New York

Provisional

<i>President:</i>	Mr. Lavrov	(Russian Federation)
<i>Members:</i>	Argentina	Mr. Petrella
	Bahrain	Mr. Al-Dosari
	Brazil	Mr. Fonseca
	Canada	Mr. Fowler
	China	Mr. Shen Guofang
	France	Mr. Dejammet
	Gabon	Mr. Eboumy
	Gambia	Mr. Jagne
	Malaysia	Mr. Hasmy
	Namibia	Mr. Andjaba
	Netherlands	Mr. Hamer
	Slovenia	Mr. Türk
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Mr. Eldon
	United States of America	Mr. Holbrooke

Agenda

The situation in Sierra Leone

Eighth report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Observer Mission in Sierra Leone
(S/1999/1003)

The meeting was called to order at 11.40 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation in Sierra Leone

Eighth report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Observer Mission in Sierra Leone (S/1999/1003)

The President (*spoke in Russian*): I should like to inform the Council that I have received letters from the representatives of Nigeria and Sierra Leone, in which they request to be invited to participate in the discussion of the item on the Council's agenda. In conformity with the usual practice, I propose, with the consent of the Council, to invite those representatives to participate in the discussion, without the right to vote, in accordance with the relevant provisions of the Charter and rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

At the invitation of the President, Mr. Kamara (Sierra Leone) took a seat at the Council table; Mr. Mbanefo (Nigeria) took a seat at the side of the Council chamber.

The President (*spoke in Russian*): In accordance with the understanding reached in the Council's prior consultations, and in the absence of objection, I shall take it that the Security Council agrees to extend an invitation under rule 39 of its provisional rules of procedure to Mr. Olara Otunnu, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

I invite Mr. Otunnu to take a seat at the Council table.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda. The Council is meeting in accordance with the understanding reached in its prior consultations.

Members of the Council have before them the eighth report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Observer Mission in Sierra Leone (UNOMSIL), document S/1999/1003.

Members of the Council also have before them document S/1999/1069, which contains the text of a draft resolution prepared in the course of the Council's prior consultations.

I should also like to draw the attention of members of the Council to document S/1999/1073, containing the text of a letter dated 19 October 1999 from Togo, transmitting the decision of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) redefining the mandate of the ECOWAS Monitoring Group in Sierra Leone.

In accordance with the decision taken earlier in the meeting, I now call on Mr. Olara Otunnu, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict.

Mr. Otunnu: I should like from the outset to pay a very special tribute to the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) Monitoring Group (ECOMOG), and to Nigeria in particular, for the very exceptional contribution and sacrifice that they have made over these last several years on behalf of the children and the people of Sierra Leone.

I visited Sierra Leone recently to assess first-hand the conditions of children in the country following the signing of the Lomé Peace Agreement and to identify key measures and initiatives needed to ensure the protection and welfare of children in the aftermath of the war.

The people of Sierra Leone have two overriding preoccupations. First, they desperately want to be sure that this very evil war has finally ended for ever. Secondly, they want to see the re-establishment of a credible level of security in the country; above all, this means disarming the combatants. Many Sierra Leoneans believe that without disarmament, they will remain highly vulnerable, as the armed groups might be tempted to reverse the little progress made so far.

Apart from the immediate imperatives of ending the war and re-establishing security, the most daunting challenge facing Sierra Leonean society today is what they call "the crisis of young people", the desperate conditions of young children and adolescents.

The children of Sierra Leone have suffered beyond belief. Many children have been deliberately maimed, with their limbs brutally cut off. The youngest child I met, Abu Sesay, who is now 10 months old, had his leg

cut off by the rebels when he was barely two months old. In the month of January 1999 alone, over 4,000 children were abducted during the incursion by the rebels into Freetown; it is estimated that 60 per cent of abducted children are young girls, the vast majority of whom are reported to have been sexually abused. Thousands of children have been serving as child soldiers in the three main fighting groups: the Revolutionary United Front of Sierra Leone (RUF), the Armed Forces Revolutionary Council (AFRC) and the Civil Defence Force (CDF).

Over 3 million Sierra Leoneans — two thirds of the total population — have been displaced by war within and outside their country, more than 60 per cent of them children. Some 10,000 children are estimated to have been separated from their parents as a result of the war. Today there are more than 3,000 “street children” in Freetown alone; and many children are suffering from serious psychological trauma, the particular trauma of children within the generalized trauma of the entire society.

In view of what I have witnessed on the ground in Sierra Leone recently and the discussions I held with the national leaders, United Nations agencies and non-governmental organizations, and drawing on previous commitments made to me, I have proposed a special agenda for action for the children of Sierra Leone. These are extraordinary circumstances requiring special measures on behalf of children. Children must not be short-changed during this critical period of healing and rebuilding. To this end, the 15-point agenda puts forward several measures and initiatives. Among the principal elements are the following.

There is an urgent need to establish a national commission for children to ensure that their protection and welfare will be a central concern in the aftermath of the war, and that this will be reflected in national priority-setting, policy-making and resource allocation.

As to incorporating child protection into the mandate and operations of the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL), I have been advocating that, as a general policy, child protection and welfare should constitute an explicit priority in the mandate of every United Nations peace operation, that a child-protection advocate should always be attached to each operation to promote the implementation of this component of the mandate, and that appropriate training should be given to peacekeeping personnel, both civilian and military, concerning the protection of the rights of children and women. I am pleased that these three new elements are now being incorporated into the mandate and operation of

UNAMSIL. The first child-protection advocate will be drawn from the ranks of the United Nations Children's Fund.

On the subject of rehabilitation of amputees, a whole new community of persons has suddenly emerged in Sierra Leone — persons without limbs — as a result of the diabolical practice of brutally cutting off the hands and legs of victims. One of the most horrifying experiences I had was my visit to the Murray Town Camp for amputees in Freetown.

This is a completely new phenomenon, one to which the community in Sierra Leone has no ready response. A special programme is needed for this category of victims, to provide trauma counselling, physical therapy and technical and material support.

The extensive and systematic sexual abuse visited upon young girls is one of the most painful and traumatic legacies of the war in Sierra Leone. The victims' trauma is compounded by social stigma and reticence to address this issue. A special programme is needed to address the special needs of this group of victims, including their health needs, a campaign of sensitization of local communities and trauma counselling.

A large number of children were abducted during the war, most of whom still remain behind rebel lines. Gaining access to them and obtaining their release is a most pressing concern. Moreover, the health and food situation behind rebel lines remains very poor. Furthermore, based on the experiences of those children who have been released, we believe that many children behind rebel lines were reconditioned with hard drugs following their capture.

The disarmament and demobilization of combatants is at the heart of the Lomé peace process. Within that critical process, the demobilization and reintegration of children needs special attention. The disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programme about to be implemented should therefore incorporate specific components for children. Two days ago the Government of Sierra Leone launched a programme to disarm and demobilize rebel fighters. In a symbolic ceremony in Freetown, rebel soldiers, many of them children, handed in their weapons to the cheers of hundreds of civilian onlookers. This is a very welcome development.

More than three million persons, over 60 per cent of whom are children, have been displaced by the war in

Sierra Leone. More than 2.5 million are displaced within the country in very difficult conditions, and more than half a million have fled as refugees to neighbouring countries, mostly to Guinea. More resources will be needed to increase the capacity of the Government, relief agencies and non-governmental organizations to organize the return and resettlement.

With regard to rehabilitation of basic educational and medical services, basic social facilities and services were largely destroyed during the years of war. The rehabilitation of services that benefit children, especially educational and medical facilities, particularly in rural areas, should constitute a clear priority in the post-conflict recovery programme.

As to neighbourhood initiatives, it has become clear that a number of cross-border issues, including small arms flows, refugee movements, cross-border recruitment of child soldiers, family tracing and reunification, impact on the protection and rights of children within Sierra Leone. This is why we have proposed a neighbourhood initiative for the sub-region comprising Sierra Leone, Liberia and Guinea. An inter-agency mission led by a task force under the leadership of United Nations Children's Fund and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) will soon visit the region to assess and propose concrete initiatives for this purpose.

Translating this agenda into action will require serious commitment and concerted effort on the part of both national actors and the international community.

Now the particular fate of children is being played out in a broader context of war and peace in Sierra Leone, and in that connection, some of the more enduring and general impressions I formed were the following.

First, the Sierra Leoneans are very lucid about the very high moral price they have had to pay to end the war and the attendant atrocities. Typically, they told me and over again: "We had to swallow a bitter pill for the sake of peace; we had to do whatever it took to end this war, or, that was the price we had to pay to end the atrocities". It is too early to tell how this will play out in the long run in terms of the imperatives of both accountability and reconciliation.

Secondly, the diabolical atrocities committed in Sierra Leone were not the result of mass violence or inter-communal upheavals along ethnic or religious lines, as we have seen in other situations of conflict. Rather, it was

the work of a small segment of the population — well armed, deeply alienated and bitter — unleashing organized and indiscriminate terror on the rest of society.

Thirdly, I discovered that Sierra Leoneans at all levels are remarkably well informed about Kosovo. Everywhere I went, I was challenged to explain perceived discrepancies in the attitude and response of the international community with regard to the needs of children in the two situations. I recall that in the Massakoundou refugee camp in Guinea a young man approached me and gave me figures in dollars and cents of what the international community was spending on a child in Kosovo as compared to a child in Sierra Leone. I thought the lad must be bluffing, so I asked him "Where did you get these figures?" He looked right at me and shot right back: "I got these figures from the BBC". I checked afterwards; he was right.

This experience underscores the critical need — in order to maintain credibility and solidarity — for the international community to be seen to be responding with the same level of concern wherever children are in need of protection and support. The deliberations of the Security Council today and their outcome will go a long way to address this issue.

Fourthly, Guinea is a small and relatively poor country, but it has assumed a major responsibility for refugees about which we hear very little. Currently it is hosting more than half a million people from Sierra Leone and Liberia who are officially registered with UNHCR, in addition to a significant number of unregistered persons who have also fled from neighbouring countries. The population of officially registered refugees now constitutes more than 10 per cent of the population of Guinea.

I was so very struck in these circumstances by the hospitality of the local population, by the excellent rapport between the local population and the refugees and by the cooperation extended to the UNHCR by the Government of Guinea. In the prefecture of Kissidougou, for example, I discovered that the local community had decided on their own initiative to have their own children attend school only a half-day, in the morning, in order to allow refugee children to use the same school facilities in the afternoon.

The sheer magnitude of this burden on Guinea has begun to place significant stress on the economy, social services, environment and security. Guinea deserves more

recognition and support for its role and solidarity, and the UNHCR needs more resources to provide for the refugees in the country.

Fifthly, in spite of the nightmare that the country has gone through, Sierra Leone is not a basket case. Sierra Leone is a country which has retained a number of hidden strong points which have survived the war. Among them are an elected Government that enjoys widespread legitimacy within the population — a rare fact in the aftermath of a war; a strong and active civil society; a fabric of national cohesion, without significant polarization along ethnic or religious lines; a land endowed with rich soil and considerable mineral resources; and a tradition of higher education. After all, Fourah Bay College was for several decades a leading regional centre of excellence for the whole of West Africa. Of course, none of these strong points can kick in without the prerequisites of peace and security being in place. The international community can play an important role in creating that environment.

In conclusion, I should like to make the following appeals on behalf of the children of Sierra Leone.

I appeal to the political leaders to demonstrate their commitment to peace by taking bold and concrete measures to implement the Lomé Peace Agreement. In this regard, I welcome the return of Mr. Foday Sankoh and Mr. Paul Koroma to Freetown. This was a matter of great relief for the people of Sierra Leone and a critical element for generating confidence in the peace process.

I urge the leadership of the RUF and the AFRC to level with the children of Sierra Leone and to acknowledge fully their role in the horrific atrocities committed during the war, most of them directed against children and women.

Finally, I address a particular appeal to the international community not to let the children of Sierra Leone down by again adopting a wait-and-see attitude. The Lomé Peace Agreement is a fragile instrument of peace that requires a lot of local and international support for its implementation and consolidation.

It is now afternoon in Sierra Leone. I can see the young people congregating around small transistor radios. They are tuned in, eagerly awaiting the outcome of the Council's deliberations. Thank you for taking steps that will provide hope for the children and all the people of Sierra Leone. Giving renewed hope to the children of Sierra Leone is surely one of the best ways to ensure national

recovery for a country that has suffered so much for so long.

The President (*spoke in Russian*): The next speaker inscribed on my list is the representative of Sierra Leone, on whom I now call.

Mr. Kamara (Sierra Leone): Let me first of all congratulate you, Sir, on your assumption of the presidency of the Security Council for this month. Allow me also to pay tribute to you, to your predecessors and to other members of the Council for making it possible for us to arrive at this important stage of the Council's deliberations on the situation in Sierra Leone.

The people of Sierra Leone are anxiously but patiently waiting for the decision that the Security Council will be making this afternoon to approve the establishment and deployment of a full-fledged United Nations peacekeeping operation in the country. The adoption of this draft resolution will bring some relief to our people, who were beginning to ask whether this body, which has the primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security, had relegated their concerns to the bottom of the Council's agenda. By its action today the Council will erase that perception, and convincingly so. For this we are very grateful. On their behalf, and on behalf of the Government of Sierra Leone, I would like to express our sincere gratitude to all members of the Council, and to non-members as well, for their individual and collective contributions and support.

My delegation would like to speak briefly on three aspects of the draft resolution that the Council will be adopting this afternoon.

For a country that has suffered from what has been described as some of the starkest and most brutal human rights violations the world has seen in recent years, no one should underestimate the importance that the Government attaches to the security and safety of the people, especially innocent young children. Indeed, the Council has itself emphasized that the plight of children is among the most pressing challenges facing Sierra Leone. Therefore, in our view, the draft resolution that the Security Council will be adopting provides for an additional and more durable security blanket for all Sierra Leoneans.

Of course, we are aware of and appreciate the role that the United Nations Observer Mission in Sierra Leone (UNOMSIL) has played in the peace process. However,

we must admit that it was not equipped to deal with certain situations before and after the Lomé Peace Agreement signed by the Government of Sierra Leone and the Revolutionary United Front (RUF). This is why the Sierra Leone delegation could not help but highlight paragraph 14 of the draft resolution, which says that acting under Chapter VII of the Charter, the new United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone, in discharge of its mandate, may take the necessary measures to ensure the safety and freedom of movement of United Nations personnel and, circumstances permitting, to afford protection to civilians under imminent threat of physical violence. In the view of my delegation, whatever interpretation others may give to this particular paragraph, we regard it as an insurance policy for both international peacekeepers and innocent civilians. We also believe that it sends a clear message to any potential violator of human rights on a gross scale: the international community will not turn a blind eye if and when innocent civilians are under threat of physical violence.

A second aspect of the draft resolution that my delegation wishes to address is that it has underscored the efficacy of practical cooperation between the United Nations and African regional or subregional organizations in peacekeeping activities. In every presidential statement and in every resolution on the situation in Sierra Leone since 1997, the Security Council has emphasized the key or indispensable role that the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) Monitoring Group (ECOMOG) has played in the maintenance of security and stability in Sierra Leone. Led by the Federal Republic of Nigeria, ECOMOG's performance has been exemplary. In the absence of a United Nations peacekeeping force, and in cooperation with UNOMSIL, ECOMOG has held the fort. It also enjoys the confidence of all the parties, especially the RUF, in the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration process for ex-combatants.

The continued presence of ECOMOG in Sierra Leone is crucial for the successful implementation of the Lomé Agreement and the consolidation of peace in Sierra Leone. As the Secretary-General points out in his recent report to the Security Council, even the deployment of a sizable United Nations force of up to 6,000 troops will not fully substitute for the functions so ably performed by ECOMOG. We agree with him that the concept of operations of the new force that will be approved by the Council today is predicated upon ECOMOG's continued presence in Sierra Leone.

While we welcome the contingency plan recommended by the Secretary-General in the event of a withdrawal by

ECOMOG or the eventual withdrawal of Nigerian troops, my delegation would like to take this opportunity to appeal to the Security Council to do everything in its power to ensure that ECOMOG remains in Sierra Leone for the time being. ECOMOG and the United Nations are partners for peace and security in Sierra Leone. The presence of the two organizations in Sierra Leone and cooperation between them are required under the Lomé Peace Agreement. In addition, the Security Council, in paragraph 7 of the draft resolution that we are about to adopt, has approved the new mandate given to ECOMOG by its parent body, the Economic Community of West African States.

The third and last aspect of this draft resolution, which my delegation would like to stress, pertains to the implementation of the draft resolution. The people of Sierra Leone are grateful to the Security Council for the decision that is about to be taken to provide what I described earlier as a more durable security blanket for them, and to assist in the implementation of the Lomé Peace Agreement. Here it is relevant to ask how soon this will take place. How soon will the international community provide the required resources for this sensitive process of disarmament and demobilization? How soon will the first contingent of the new United Nations peacekeeping force arrive in the area of operation? Will it take as long as the deployment of the 210 observers approved by the Security Council several months ago?

In closing, let me recall that just over a year ago, and long before the devastating rebel onslaught on the nation's capital on 6 January last, and long before the peace talks between the Government and the RUF in Lomé, the Sierra Leone Government had launched a disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programme for ex-combatants. It barely got off the ground due to lack of resources. Under the terms of the Lomé Peace Agreement, the encampment, disarmament and demobilization process was to have commenced within six weeks of the signing of the Agreement. There has been a delay, which is primarily due to the lack of resources.

Two days ago, as a symbolic demonstration of the urgency of the matter, the Government went ahead and launched the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration process, in the hope that the United Nations would act quickly and deploy the new peacekeeping force in Sierra Leone. In his address on that occasion, President Kabbah said: "No more time should be wasted in the

disarmament process, as combatants want to go back home to start rebuilding their lives.” The people, victims of the conflict, and the combatants themselves are waiting anxiously for this to begin. Undoubtedly, this is the first step towards lasting peace and reconciliation.

It is our fervent hope that the adoption of this draft resolution will reassure the people of Sierra Leone that their plight, and international efforts to alleviate it, is still one of the priority items on the agenda of the Security Council.

The President (*spoke in Russian*): I thank the representative of Sierra Leone for the kind words he addressed to me.

The next speaker inscribed on my list is the representative of Nigeria. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Mbanefo (Nigeria): I wish first of all to congratulate you, Sir, on your assumption of the presidency of the Security Council. I have no doubt that the deliberations and decisions of the Council under your able leadership will serve the purposes and principles of the United Nations.

This is a particularly important occasion for me, as it is my very first address to this body. I look forward to a long and fruitful relationship with the members of the Council in our collective effort to promote international peace and security.

The adoption of the draft resolution establishing the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL) will be a landmark development in the search for durable peace in Sierra Leone that will have an impact on the United Nations, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), Nigeria and, of course, Sierra Leone.

For the United Nations, the draft resolution is an opportunity to fulfil its primary responsibility of maintaining international peace and security. It also represents a concrete attempt to assist the West African subregion in resolving a local conflict. ECOWAS and its military Monitoring Group (ECOMOG) can today breathe a sigh of relief in the knowledge that the United Nations has finally taken concrete steps to assume its responsibility to maintain peace and security in the subregion.

For Nigeria, the creation of UNAMSIL not only vindicates our conviction that the Sierra Leone crisis is a threat to international peace and security, but also relieves

us of a disproportionate burden in human and material resources.

There is no doubt that the children, women and men of Sierra Leone are the biggest beneficiaries of the decision to be taken by the Council today. After many years of destruction and deprivation on a monumental scale, bringing untold hardship to, and wreaking havoc on, the population, the people of Sierra Leone can now aspire to a normal life of peace and stability, which is necessary for the socio-economic development of not only the country but also of the entire ECOWAS subregion.

The process leading to today’s decision has been long and tortuous. Following its success in Liberia, the ECOWAS Monitoring Group took on the Sierra Leone assignment at a time when the initiative was attracting very little international attention. In spite of limited resources and inadequate logistical support and amid considerable international apathy, ECOMOG was still able to contain the crisis. Its actions culminated in the Peace Agreement signed in Lomé on 7 July 1999. It is largely those initiatives that laid the foundation establishing UNAMSIL.

We therefore pay tribute to the leadership of ECOWAS for its vision and perseverance, even in the face of daunting difficulties. Particular commendation also goes to the troop-contributing countries of ECOMOG. Ghana and Guinea deserve particular mention as principal players in ECOMOG, contributing troops and material resources as well as providing crucial logistic support. We would appreciate their continued participation in the process.

The commitment of Nigeria to international peace and security is not in doubt. In our subregion, we have deployed enormous human and material resources in the search for enduring solutions to conflicts. Our efforts in Liberia and, later, in Sierra Leone bear testimony to our devotion to the cherished principles of good-neighbourliness and international responsibility, in the conviction that no meaningful development can take place in the absence of peace and stability. In this vein, Nigeria stands ready to play its part in UNAMSIL to facilitate the implementation of the Lomé Agreement.

UNAMSIL represents a rare but desirable form of cooperation between the United Nations and a subregional organization, in fulfilment of Chapter VIII of the United Nations Charter. We support and commend this development, and hope that the United Nations

Organization will continue to employ a similar approach with other regional and subregional organizations in the pursuit of international peace and security.

My delegation would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge the contributions of donor countries in meeting the material and logistic requirements of ECOMOG and the Government of Sierra Leone. We urge the United Nations and the entire international community to commit themselves to the faithful implementation of the draft resolution in order that the people of Sierra Leone may derive the maximum benefit from this gesture of international goodwill.

In conclusion, it is our hope that the successful implementation of the draft resolution will lead to a post-conflict peace-building that ensures lasting peace, stability and socio-economic development, not only for Sierra Leone but for the entire subregion.

The President (*spoke in Russian*): I thank the representative of Nigeria for the kind words he addressed to me.

It is my understanding that the Security Council is ready to proceed to vote on the draft resolution in document S/1999/1069. If I hear no objection, I shall put the draft resolution to the vote.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

I shall first call on those members of the Council who wish to make statements before the voting.

Mr. Eldon (United Kingdom): The draft resolution which the Council is about to adopt, and which the United Kingdom has been privileged to steer through the Council, is an important and significant milestone on the long and challenging road to lasting peace in Sierra Leone. With the establishment of the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL), the United Nations is making a major contribution to ensuring that the Lomé Agreement can succeed.

The Peace Agreement signed in Lomé on 7 July offers the opportunity to bring peace to the people of Sierra Leone after eight years of bloody conflict. The United Kingdom welcomes the steps that have since been taken to implement the Agreement, by the Government of Sierra Leone, by the United Nations Observer Mission in Sierra Leone (UNOMSIL), by the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) Monitoring Group (ECOMOG) and by

the leadership of both the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) and the former Sierra Leone Armed Forces/Armed Forces Revolutionary Council (ex-SLA/AFRC). But there is still much to do.

It is essential that the international community now move quickly to support the continuing implementation of the Peace Agreement. Without international support, the Agreement will fail, as have previous peace agreements. You, Mr. President, do not need me to tell you — Special Representative Otunnu has already done so graphically enough — of the devastating consequences that that would have for the people of Sierra Leone.

The current situation in Sierra Leone is a test case. It will be seen by many as a litmus test of the commitment of the international community to resolving conflict. The establishment of UNAMSIL provides a clear opportunity for the Security Council and the United Nations membership generally to demonstrate that their commitment to conflict resolution applies as much to Africa as to other trouble spots around the world. The fact that the Security Council is ready today to authorize a major operation in Africa, with an ambitious and wide-ranging mandate, shows clearly that the readiness to act in Africa is there.

But it is also vital that the decisions taken today be implemented quickly. We cannot afford any delay in the deployment of UNAMSIL. The force has a crucial role to play in the implementation of the Lomé Agreement. Its early deployment at key locations throughout Sierra Leone will create the necessary climate of confidence. It will also help renew momentum in the peace process. The present slow pace of that process threatens to endanger the achievements that have already been made. The deployment of UNAMSIL will also facilitate the delivery of humanitarian aid to areas of Sierra Leone where there is dire need of assistance. It is vital that all parties ensure the safety and free movement of humanitarian convoys, and we call on them to do so.

A crucial element of UNAMSIL's role in Sierra Leone will be assisting the Government of Sierra Leone with the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programme. Special Representative Otunnu has rightly drawn attention to the key importance of that programme. The British Government welcomed the symbolic disarmament and demobilization ceremony attended by the leaders of the RUF and ex-SLA/AFRC which took place in Freetown on 20 October. We hope this event will act as a spur to disarmament efforts throughout the

country; there can be no excuse for further delays. Political will by the parties is still required to get the programme fully under way. But practical and financial support is also urgently needed. The United Kingdom is ready to do what more it can to help, and urges others to do likewise. We call upon all States to make urgent contributions to the World Bank trust fund to help sustain the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programme.

The United Kingdom also calls on the leaders of the RUF and the ex-SLA/AFRC to do all they can to help move the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programme forward. Both leaders must continue to encourage their followers to lay down their arms in accordance with the Peace Agreement, and to ensure the safety and freedom of movement of UNAMSIL personnel. All remaining detainees held by rebel groups should be released immediately.

UNAMSIL must also be able to protect the security and free movement of its personnel in the discharge of its mandate. It should be prepared to act to defend civilians when and where it is able to do so. But ultimately ECOMOG and the Government of Sierra Leone have responsibility for security under the Peace Agreement.

The success of UNAMSIL will also depend significantly on joint deployment and close cooperation with ECOMOG. Here I should like to echo Special Representative Otunnu's tribute to the role played by ECOMOG and by Nigeria. The readiness of ECOWAS to work in tandem with the United Nations in Sierra Leone is an important example for cooperation with regional peacekeeping efforts around the world. As the Secretary-General's report on Sierra Leone makes clear, we believe ECOMOG will continue to have a vital role in maintaining security, particularly around Freetown and Lungi, and in the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration process with UNAMSIL. I listened with close attention to what the representative of Sierra Leone had to say about the need for a continued ECOMOG presence. We commend ECOMOG's efforts and will continue to do what we can to support ECOMOG in seeing the job through. The United Kingdom is also currently working with the Government of Sierra Leone to restructure and train a new professional and democratically accountable Sierra Leone army and police force, to protect the people of Sierra Leone and encourage long-term stability.

Mr. Holbrooke (United States of America): I should like to thank you, Mr. President, for calling this important meeting today.

Before I talk about the draft resolution I would like to make a brief comment about a tragic event that occurred this morning in Banja Luka in Bosnia. I refer, of course, to the car bomb attack on Zeljko Kopanja, an important Bosnian Serb journalist, whose life is now in a critical condition as a result. We are here today to talk about similar outrages in Sierra Leone, but this kind of cowardly attack on a brave journalist in Bosnia reminds us that our work is never done and that in Bosnia, where progress has been made, the forces of darkness are still present. This is a direct effort to destroy the Dayton peace process and the work of the United Nations. The attack reminds us again that we have to work for peace throughout the world.

With regard to today's meeting on Sierra Leone, I want to begin by welcoming the statements made and by welcoming the new Permanent Representatives of Nigeria and of Sierra Leone to the United Nations where I, too, am a relative newcomer — I am in my seventh week here. I look forward to working with them closely. I was greatly moved by their remarks and, of course, by those of my friend, Mr. Otunnu, whose eloquent statement could hardly be improved upon.

By adopting today's draft resolution on Sierra Leone, the Security Council will be doing much more than merely deploying another United Nations peacekeeping force. We will be acknowledging the end of one of the most brutal civil wars and the beginning of one of the most well-deserved transitions to peace. We will be embracing the historic accord signed in Lomé, and dedicating ourselves to its implementation.

Over the past nine years, the people of Sierra Leone have been subjected to a horrible war. Half the population remains internally displaced. Over half a million Sierra Leonean citizens have become refugees. Many Sierra Leoneans have lost their lives, their families and their homes.

Today's vote is therefore important and timely. Although three months have elapsed since the Peace Agreement was signed, the situation remains fragile. In fact, earlier this week there was another skirmish between rebel factions. This reminds us again that the momentum of the peace process could easily be lost without prompt, strong, vigorous action by the international community.

Resolution of this conflict is a high priority for my Government. The United States helped broker the ceasefire and facilitate the peace process. Over the past

two years, we have provided more than \$100 million to meet humanitarian needs in Sierra Leone resulting from the war. In addition, we have provided almost \$16 million in logistical and other non-lethal support to the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) Monitoring Group (ECOMOG).

We fully recognize that we would not be where we are today were it not for the leadership of President Kabbah and the spirit of compromise displayed by the former combatants. Their willingness to put their differences aside has made the possibility of peace real. In this context, Foday Sankoh and Johnny Paul Koroma have critical roles to play in ensuring that their followers implement the Lomé Agreement. We also recognize the enormous contributions made by the ECOMOG West African peacekeepers, led by Nigeria, and we commend ECOMOG's readiness to remain in the field and to proceed with disarmament and demobilization.

But of course most of the credit must go to the people of Sierra Leone themselves, who displayed the necessary mix of courage and conviction to bring their country out of a terrible war.

We hope that the Lomé Agreement succeeds. We are prepared to provide appropriate support to that end. On my trips to Washington to discuss the issue of United States arrears, I have mentioned the Sierra Leone issue as coequal in importance with East Timor and Kosovo in every discussion with every member of Congress, and have stressed to them that there is no double standard in the United States concerning African peacekeeping — that Sierra Leone is as important to us as Kosovo and East Timor. I am gratified to say that the members of Congress have not objected in the least to this attempt to raise the profile and the importance of both Sierra Leone, which the Secretary of State visited only two days ago, and Africa in general.

We remain committed to justice and accountability. We are working to help the Government of Sierra Leone to establish a truth and reconciliation commission and a human rights commission as called for in the Lomé Agreement. We support an international fact-finding mission to assist the work and proceedings of the truth and reconciliation and human rights commissions. And we hope — we pray — that these commissions can bring healing and reconciliation to Sierra Leone. We remain committed to the pursuit of accountability. At the same time, we recognize the need to allow the Peace Agreement to bear fruit.

Earlier this week, Secretary of State Albright visited Sierra Leone to show support for President Kabbah and his democratically elected Government. She used her visit to convey our national empathy with the people of Sierra Leone for the suffering they have endured, and our strong commitment to the restoration of peace and reconciliation. Following her visit, Secretary Albright said, "I saw people who had suffered unspeakable horror, yet who sought not revenge, but renewal". It is that process of renewal that we seek to encourage today.

We therefore fully support, with genuine enthusiasm, this important draft resolution to establish the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone. We support it because we are committed to working with Africans to make African peacekeeping work.

Mr. Hasmy (Malaysia): My delegation supports the adoption of the draft resolution before the Council this morning, as we believe that the establishment and deployment of the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL) is overdue given the fact that the Lomé Peace Agreement was signed more than three months ago. We have commended the courageous step taken by the Government and the people of Sierra Leone to end the conflict that had afflicted the country and to begin the long process towards lasting peace. We believe that the presence of UNAMSIL will help create a climate of confidence necessary for the consolidation of peace and reconciliation. However, the successful implementation of the Lomé Peace Agreement cannot be placed solely on the shoulders of UNAMSIL; it is also the responsibility of the people, and particularly the leaders, of Sierra Leone themselves. They must make it work, with the help of the international community.

Malaysia strongly supports the deployment of a strong United Nations force in Sierra Leone. We believe that given the still fragile, even volatile, political and security situation in that country, only a peacekeeping force of credible strength, well equipped and well mandated, will be able successfully to carry out the tasks assigned to it. It is for this reason that my delegation has underlined the need for the establishment of UNAMSIL under Chapter VII of the Charter of the United Nations, consistent with the "robust rules of engagement" that the Secretary-General proposed for UNAMSIL in paragraph 43 of his report of 23 September 1999 (S/1999/1003). The hostage-taking incident involving personnel of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) Monitoring Group (ECOMOG) and the United Nations Observer Mission in Sierra Leone (UNOMSIL) in August

1999 only serves to highlight this concern. Following intensive discussions on the matter, my delegation can now support the language in the draft resolution with respect to Chapter VII. The success of UNAMSIL may well have a bearing on future peacekeeping missions that the United Nations is planning in respect of other conflict areas in Africa. For this reason it is important for UNAMSIL to be given the tools to ensure that it has a fair chance of carrying out its mission successfully.

It is in this regard that my delegation particularly welcomes the continued presence of ECOMOG in Sierra Leone to continue to provide security for the areas where its forces are located and to carry out other tasks in accordance with its mandate to ensure the implementation of the Peace Agreement. Once again, we would like to thank the countries contributing troops to ECOMOG, particularly Nigeria, which bears the main burden of ECOMOG's presence in Sierra Leone. We would urge the international community to continue to assist ECOMOG in carrying out its responsibilities. My delegation cannot stress too strongly the need for close cooperation and coordination between ECOMOG and UNAMSIL for the success of their missions.

Malaysia welcomes the return of peace to Sierra Leone after almost a decade of one of the most brutal conflicts in Africa. The war in Sierra Leone has left the population deeply scarred and traumatized — particularly the children, many of whom had been brutalized and dehumanized and had become the very instruments of the war. Their desperate plight has been vividly highlighted by the Under Secretary-General, Mr. Olara Otunnu, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, following his recent visit to the region. The cynical and cruel use and manipulation of children for purposes of war, as evidenced in some of its worst manifestations in the conflict in Sierra Leone, must be condemned in the strongest terms and must never be allowed to be repeated anywhere in the world.

We welcome the agenda for action in respect of children in situations of armed conflict, as proposed by Mr. Otunnu. We commend him for his outstanding contribution to addressing this extremely serious problem and will continue to give him strong support in his efforts.

With the ending of the conflict, the rebels must quickly begin to implement their undertakings as agreed to in the Peace Agreement. For a start, the rebel leaders must put words into deeds. They must rein in their supporters and ensure that they disarm and disband fully and without

delay. We call on all the parties to fulfil commitments they had solemnly entered into, and to continue to implement in earnest all provisions of the Lomé Agreement.

Sierra Leone has the daunting tasks of cementing the peace and embarking on the political, social and economic reconstruction and rehabilitation of the war-ravaged country. The process must begin immediately with the urgent implementation of its disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programme. The smooth implementation of that programme would consolidate the peace and contribute to alleviating the pressing humanitarian situation throughout the country. We therefore welcome the launching of the programme by the Government of Sierra Leone. In all these efforts, the special needs of the traumatized children of Sierra Leone should be addressed promptly and adequately.

Sierra Leone has been given a unique opportunity to make peace work. The road it has to traverse will not be smooth. Nevertheless, the Lomé Agreement has provided a viable framework for peace, which must be seized. For its part, the international community must ensure that the momentum of the peace process is not lost at this very critical juncture in Sierra Leone's history.

Mr. Dejammet (France) (*spoke in French*): The signing in Lomé on 7 July 1999 of a peace agreement between the legitimate Government of Sierra Leone and the rebels of the Revolutionary United Front set in motion a dynamic for a return to peace after nine years of a particularly cruel civil conflict. We all remember the testimony of those who visited Sierra Leone and who called for an effort by the international community to restore peace to a terribly stricken region. In this regard, I would like to thank Mr. Otunnu for his appeals to us in the past, which he renewed today for his efforts have helped us to support the actions of those, above all the Africans, who have been striving to restore peace and concord to a region that has been so painfully afflicted.

Clearly, we must not miss this opportunity of laying the foundations for lasting peace in Sierra Leone, of finally guaranteeing its people free access to all public social services, and of helping to strengthen national reconciliation and the development of the country.

Of course, as new prospects are opening up, we must today thank those who have made this development possible, and express our deep gratitude to the members of the Economic Community of West African States for

the actions they have taken and the sacrifices they have made. We especially thank Nigeria, which throughout this crisis has been a driving force in restoring peace to Sierra Leone.

Now the return to Freetown of Foday Sankoh and Johnny Paul Koroma and the appointment to the Government of rebel representatives are obviously encouraging developments. We invite all the parties, but particularly the rebel groups, to respect in good faith the commitments made at Lomé.

In this regard, we are grateful, of course, for the spirit of conciliation and tolerance displayed by the Government of President Kabbah, once again attested to by the statement here of the representative of Sierra Leone, for which we are also grateful.

While the Lomé Agreement represents a positive development for peace and security in West Africa, the Security Council must clearly have the means to implement it. This is why we have always been in favour of the recommendations of the Secretary-General calling for the creation of the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL), with significant levels of military personnel and robust rules of engagement so that it can defend itself and within its mandate — as was rightly the wish of the representative of Canada, a wish shared by all the members of the Council — be able to guarantee the protection of threatened civilian populations.

Today, as we adopt a draft resolution relating to UNAMSIL, and at the same time envisage prolonging the mandate of the United Nations Mission in the Central African Republic, we can conclude that these new developments are an encouraging sign for the African continent, which will take note of the extent of the sincere receptiveness of the members of the Security Council to its aspirations.

We believe that when there are serious prospects of resolving conflicts, the international community, and above all the Security Council, must stand side by side with the leaders and people of Africa to facilitate a peaceful solution. We hope that the commitment we are making today to Sierra Leone, in the very tangible form of a United Nations peacekeeping operation, can be pursued in other regions of Africa, particularly in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Mr. Jagne (Gambia): Prior to the conclusion of negotiations resulting in the draft resolution before us, most

of us were totally dispirited about the whole question of peacekeeping operations in Africa. We were crestfallen, because of the fear that the concept of peacekeeping in Africa was no longer of interest to the Council. But, with the quality of the draft resolution, those fears have now been allayed. We have been reassured that interest in the continent's problems has not been lost.

We are therefore most grateful to the delegation of the United Kingdom for its initiative and, indeed, for its constructive approach to the proposals made by various delegations with a view to improving the text. We cannot help signalling out Canada for insisting so much, and rightly so, on the protection of civilians. And, to crown it all, United States Secretary of State Madeleine Albright visited Sierra Leone a few days ago to demonstrate once again the unflinching support of the United States for the peace process. All these expressions of support will send the right signals to the Government and the entire people of Sierra Leone, that the rest of the international community is behind them in their effort to consolidate the peace and to rebuild their country.

We all agree that it has been a long and arduous task to get to where we are today. This unprecedented show of international support also constitutes a unique opportunity, which must be seized by the people of Sierra Leone, to restore their beautiful country to its former glory days as a great centre of learning, of trade and commerce, of culture — in short, as the vibrant nation that it once was. In order to achieve this, however, as called for in the draft resolution, the parties must fulfil their commitments under the Peace Agreement. In this connection, the process of disarmament, demobilization and reintegration should be accelerated. With the return to Freetown of the leaders of the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) and the Armed Forces Revolutionary Council, we hope that this exercise will indeed be accelerated.

My delegation would also like to take this opportunity to commend the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) Monitoring Group (ECOMOG) and the troop-contributing countries for their selfless sacrifice, without which the whole situation in Sierra Leone would have been an entirely different story today. The new mandate for ECOMOG adopted by ECOWAS is a clear indication of the positive evolution of the situation, and we are confident that the ECOMOG forces will continue to play their role with prowess and professionalism.

With the imminent deployment of the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL), it is not only desirable but also absolutely necessary to establish close cooperation and coordination with ECOMOG. Meanwhile, my delegation welcomes the activities of the Joint Implementation Committee and the Joint Monitoring Commission for the important work they are doing.

The situation in Sierra Leone is clearly very fragile. There is an urgent need for security, without which it will not be possible to carry out the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of the 45,000 ex-combatants, thereby removing the security threat.

As we all know, ECOMOG cannot do this alone. We have always argued that the United Nations cannot subcontract its responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security. Lack of financial and other resources has never been and will never be a legitimate excuse for abdicating this responsibility.

We therefore welcome the courageous position of the Council on Sierra Leone this time, which augurs well for future peacekeeping operations in Africa. We are indeed encouraged by what Ambassador Holbrooke has just said. It is also true that when we understand the importance of putting our own house in order, by placing the collective interest above our narrow individual interests, the support and solidarity of the other members of the international community will not be found wanting.

The deployment of a United Nations peacekeeping force with a robust mandate capable of responding to threats to the implementation of the Peace Agreement and to the security of civilians is essential if we are to succeed in Sierra Leone. In this context, my delegation welcomes the establishment of UNAMSIL with a strength of 6,000 military personnel. We also support the tasks to be carried out by UNAMSIL, as provided for in the draft resolution under consideration.

My delegation notes that the plight of children is among the most pressing challenges facing Sierra Leone. We welcome the commitment of the Government of Sierra Leone, UNAMSIL and others to help address this problem. We are glad to note that important questions such as this one have been addressed in the draft resolution.

On the whole the draft addresses the most important issues facing Sierra Leone, and we will therefore vote in favour of it.

Once again, my delegation is heartened to note that the ceasefire agreement between the Government of Sierra Leone and the RUF is holding. The people of Sierra Leone now have an opportunity to repair the damage done to their country in this long and fratricidal conflict. This is exactly what this draft resolution is offering to the people of Sierra Leone, and we hope that they will measure up to the challenge and strike while the iron is hot.

Mr. Hamer (Netherlands): I would like, first of all, to thank Mr. Otunnu for his valuable and, at the same time, very disturbing briefing this morning.

The Netherlands welcomes the draft resolution before the Council, which will establish the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL). In doing so, the Security Council will be taking a decisive and necessary step in support of the Lomé Peace Agreement. The Agreement's ultimate success, however, remains in the hands of the parties themselves.

An element of critical importance in this phase is disarmament, demobilization and reintegration. Success of the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programme will be an important indicator of the success of the peace process as a whole. It is our intention to contribute to the World Bank trust fund set up to cover the costs of the disarmament programme. All efforts should now be made by the parties involved to make sure the fighters disband, give up their arms and are reintegrated into civil life. The first steps towards this end were taken on 20 October, with the inauguration of the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programme.

Special attention must be given to child soldiers, who are often victims and perpetrators at the same time. Collected arms should be destroyed immediately to prevent them from entering into circulation again.

The situation in Sierra Leone remains volatile, as recent events have demonstrated. The Security Council shares the opinion of the Secretary-General — which was seconded by the representative of Sierra Leone in his statement today — that robust rules of engagement are indeed essential if UNAMSIL is to fulfil its mandate and protect itself and civilians under threat. It is therefore important that UNAMSIL, as per paragraph 14 of the draft resolution before us, be given the teeth it may need to live up to these responsibilities.

For peace in Sierra Leone to be lasting, it is essential that those responsible for the sufferings and the atrocities that occurred during the eight-year civil war not go unpunished. Peace without accountability cannot be a lasting peace. The work of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission should start as soon as possible in an effective manner and should get all the support it needs, both from the parties themselves and from the international community. Progress in this field, in our view, will serve as another test of the success of the peace process.

Finally, I would like to pay tribute to the Economic Community of West African States Monitoring Group (ECOMOG) and its troop-contributing countries — in the first place Nigeria — for its continued efforts towards peace in Sierra Leone. I also thank the Secretary-General and his Special Representative for their important contribution. We count on continued close cooperation between ECOMOG and UNAMSIL, which is going to be of paramount importance in the months ahead.

The Netherlands, for its part, is prepared to continue and to renew its support to ECOMOG, as we have done in the past through our support to a Malian ECOMOG contingent.

Mr. Shen Guofang (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): First of all, I wish to thank Mr. Otunnu for his very detailed briefing.

Since the signing, last 7 July, of the Lomé Peace Agreement by the Government of Sierra Leone and the Revolutionary United Front, the situation in Sierra Leone has, on balance, remained calm and the ceasefire agreement has been observed. The disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of ex-combatants has started. Other relevant provisions of the Agreement have also been implemented to varying degrees.

The Chinese delegation is pleased with this progress and wishes, in this connection, to express its thanks to the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the ECOWAS Monitoring Group (ECOMOG) for their protracted and outstanding contributions to the peace process in Sierra Leone.

At the same time, we are soberly aware that many aspects of the situation in Sierra Leone remain uncertain and the forces of peace are still fragile. Therefore, at this juncture it is vitally important that the international community provide Sierra Leone further help and encouragement.

China has consistently been of the view that the United Nations, and the Security Council in particular, should respond as soon as possible after the signing of the Lomé Peace Agreement, in order to provide concrete support to the peace process in the country. In this regard, we thank the Secretary-General for his report to the Security Council of 23 September, as contained in document in S/1999/1003, which clearly sets forth specific recommendations for the establishment of the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL).

At the same time we are satisfied that the Council has, on this basis, quickly drafted the relevant draft resolution and reached agreement on the text after many rounds of consultations.

The draft resolution before us is the first Council resolution on an African question to be adopted since the Council's open debate on Africa last month. It accommodates the requests of the Government of Sierra Leone and the African members and reflects the concerns of other Council members. It is comprehensive and balanced and, to a certain degree, reflects the Council's attention to and input on African issues. China appreciates this.

We hope that the Secretariat will begin to prepare as soon as possible for the deployment of UNAMSIL and, at the earliest possible opportunity, conduct consultations with the Government of Sierra Leone on specific arrangements. We trust that, under the leadership of Ambassador Okelo, the Secretary-General's Special Representative, the Mission will enjoy close cooperation with the Government of Sierra Leone and the Economic Community of West African States Monitoring Group and that it will strive with dedication and sincerity to play an important role in the consolidation of peace in Sierra Leone.

At present, the people of Sierra Leone generally aspire to peace and stability and long for national reconciliation. They hope for an early start to economic reconstruction and the rapid healing of the country's wounds from eight years of civil war. We believe that the draft resolution to be adopted by the Council on the establishment of UNAMSIL will give new impetus to the peace process in Sierra Leone and contribute to the economic development and stabilization of that country.

In view of all this, the Chinese delegation will vote in favour of the draft resolution before us.

Mr. Fonseca (Brazil): I would like to join my colleagues in thanking the Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict, Mr. Olara Otunnu, for his statement. We are also grateful for the presentations of the Permanent Representatives of Sierra Leone and Nigeria.

My delegation was shocked by the figures and facts to which Mr. Otunnu referred on the magnitude of the violence and internal displacement affecting the lives of children in Sierra Leone. The expression he used — “diabolical atrocities” — is sad testimony to the levels of irrationality and violence human nature sometimes reaches. Mr. Otunnu has again voiced an eloquent and compelling warning to us. We think that the core of his message is quite simple: The international community has to pay persistent and consistent attention to the plight of children in all parts of the world, without exception or discrimination.

There is hope again in Sierra Leone. My delegation wishes to congratulate the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) members on their efforts to uphold the peace process in that country. We also commend the role played by the Contact Group to promote political dialogue and national reconciliation. Brazil hopes that the people of Sierra Leone — who are, after all, the only ones responsible for the democratic renewal of the country — will sustain the peace process.

Brazil fully supports the terms of the draft resolution the Council is about to adopt today and the establishment of the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone. My delegation also wants to thank the leadership of the British delegation in the process leading to the adoption of this draft resolution. We look forward to fast progress in the implementation of the programme of disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of the rebel forces, which is essential to ensuring stability and lasting peace in that country.

In our view, at this critical juncture in the conflict in Sierra Leone, there is need to place emphasis on the rehabilitation and reconstruction of the country. The international community, through the coordinated efforts of the United Nations system, must develop a long-term strategy for Sierra Leone that includes security, political, economic, social and humanitarian aspects, as well as support for regional actors and organizations.

Taking into account the need to address the violations of human rights perpetrated during the civil war, the peace process should also focus its attention on the promotion and

protection of human rights, particularly through the investigation of massacres that have taken place in the recent past. The prompt establishment and effective functioning of the truth and reconciliation and human rights commissions are crucial for the consolidation of peace and national reconciliation in Sierra Leone.

We expect that the necessary political conditions will be put in place so as to allow a vigorous peacekeeping involvement of the United Nations in other conflicts in Africa to also materialize soon. The draft resolution to be adopted today augurs well in this respect.

Mr. Petrella (Argentina) (*spoke in Spanish*): Allow me first to welcome the new Permanent Representatives of Sierra Leone and Nigeria to the Council. They both presented their credentials yesterday and we wish them the greatest success in their important and difficult posts.

I believe that we can assert today that, after nine years of struggle, the population of Sierra Leone can look to the future with hope. Along this long and difficult path towards peace, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), its Monitoring Group (ECOMOG) and the United Nations have made significant contributions in defending and in allowing the values of democracy, freedom and respect for human rights to be effectively restored.

As we stated at our formal meeting in August, the Lomé Peace Agreement marked a decisive moment in Sierra Leone’s recent history. We trust that the peacekeeping operation that we shall establish today will effectively contribute to the Agreement’s implementation. In our opinion, the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL) has a clear mandate on four distinct levels: on the military level, through assistance to the Government of Sierra Leone in the implementation of the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programme for former combatants and in monitoring the ceasefire; on the political level, by promoting confidence-building measures among the parties and providing electoral assistance, when required; on the humanitarian level, by facilitating the delivery of assistance; and on the human rights level, by supporting respect for and the promotion of these rights.

I wish to refer in particular to paragraph 14 of the draft resolution before us, which authorizes UNAMSIL to act under Chapter VII of the Charter towards two well-defined objectives: to ensure the security and freedom of movement of its personnel and to afford protection to

civilians under imminent threat of physical violence. The safety and security of personnel in the field of operations must be an essential condition of all peacekeeping missions. In the course of this year alone, many staff members of the United Nations have fallen victim. The women and men working in the service of the Organization should not be unduly vulnerable. As the Deputy Secretary-General said to the General Assembly on 14 October,

“improved security is not a luxury. It should be viewed... as an essential operating cost” (A/54/PV.34).

There can be no doubt that the personnel of UNAMSIL will be carrying out their duties in a hazardous environment. That is why we deem it appropriate that the draft resolution reinforce UNAMSIL’s rules of engagement with the additional authority of Chapter VII. Similarly, the Convention on the Safety of United Nations and Associated Personnel provides the legal mechanisms required for the trial and punishment of those committing crimes against United Nations personnel. In this regard, we would venture once again to appeal to those States that have not yet done so to ratify that Convention.

We believe that the protection of civilians under Chapter VII is a pertinent development in the context of the mandate of a peacekeeping operation. This draft resolution is significant in that it introduces a new, fundamental political, legal and moral dimension. This bears on the credibility of the Security Council and shows that the Council has learned from its own experience and that it will not remain indifferent to indiscriminate attacks against the civilian population. At the same time, we are realistic. The objective to be fulfilled must be consonant with the means provided. For that reason, we agree with the limits that operative paragraph 14 of the draft resolution sets on UNAMSIL’s actions. It establishes an objective limit, the competence the Council wishes to give UNAMSIL, a geographic limit — UNAMSIL’s area of deployment — and a functional limit — it does not overlap the specific security responsibilities entrusted to ECOMOG pursuant to the mandate adopted by ECOWAS on 25 August 1999.

We believe we must seriously consider what Ambassador Olara Otunnu said at the beginning of this debate. The atrocities committed against children and innocent civilians must be compensated for as much as possible. In this regard, the very recent visit of Mrs. Albright to Sierra Leone left us with unforgettable images. Thus, paragraph 18 of the draft resolution is appropriate in that it refers to the rehabilitation of child soldiers and the needs of all children affected by the conflict. UNAMSIL

will undoubtedly give this provision the necessary scope, within its mandate, to address the legitimate concerns that Ambassador Otunnu underscored before the Council.

UNAMSIL is the first in a series of large-scale peacekeeping operations that the Security Council will be creating in coming weeks. There is undoubtedly a need for a relaunching of peacekeeping operations. At the same time, if they are to fulfil their mandates properly, the United Nations must provide the necessary resources.

The United Nations has an irreplaceable role to play in peacekeeping and peace-building in Sierra Leone. We believe that this draft resolution establishes the appropriate legal and political framework so that this task can be successfully fulfilled.

Mr. Fowler (Canada): Mr. President, we salute your invitation to Mr. Olara Otunnu to set the context for our discussion of Sierra Leone this morning. I can think of no more fitting reminder of what we are seeking to achieve with the draft resolution before us than Special Representative Otunnu’s vivid and jolting reminder of the horrors perpetrated upon children — including infants as young as eight weeks old — over the course of Sierra Leone’s eight-year-long civil war.

Additionally, it is fitting that we should be welcoming to this table new colleagues from both Sierra Leone and Nigeria on this occasion. The Canadian delegation looks forward to working closely with both Ambassadors Kamara and Mabanefo as the Security Council grapples with threats to the peace and stability of their region.

(spoke in French)

Canada will support the draft resolution before us today. My delegation would like to thank our British colleagues in particular for their efforts to integrate the views of all Council members in the draft resolution. The adoption today of the draft resolution establishing the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL) will be an important step in the implementation of the Lomé Agreement. It will show our firm commitment to the peace process, both that of the Council and that of the broader international community. We thank all those whose efforts have brought us to this important juncture, and in particular Mr. Okelo, the personnel of the United Nations Observer Mission in Sierra Leone, the troop-contributing countries, in particular Nigeria, and, of

course, all the personnel of the Economic Community of West African States Monitoring Group (ECOMOG).

We also wish to pay a tribute to the heroic efforts of humanitarian workers in Sierra Leone. Far too often, humanitarian personnel are victims of the very violence whose effects they are trying to alleviate. The growing number of casualties among them demands that we take urgent measures, as was so forcefully and eloquently pointed out by the Deputy Secretary-General in her statement to the General Assembly last week.

(spoke in English)

The establishment of a United Nations-funded and United Nations-commanded peacekeeping operation will at last allow the international community to relieve some of the burden assumed by ECOMOG for so long. The funding of this Mission through assessed contributions will ensure that much of the financial load is assumed by the wider international community and that UNAMSIL will be equipped with a predictable source of financial support. It is of considerable regret to us that some of the soldiers serving in Sierra Leone on behalf of the international community, the non-UNAMSIL ECOMOG contingents, will not be funded on this basis and will instead continue to rely on voluntary contributions, which have been desperately slow in coming and which are, at least on the basis of past practice, unlikely to relieve significantly the financial burden ECOMOG troop-contributors have assumed.

The conflict in Sierra Leone has had a truly tragic impact: tragic in its dimensions and tragic in its consequences for the civilian population. The people of that small, impoverished nation have been subject to unimaginable atrocities and unspeakable suffering. Most often the victims have been women and children. The deployment of a United Nations peacekeeping operation will help provide, in cooperation with ECOMOG, a more secure environment for the people of Sierra Leone. In this regard, Canada is pleased that UNAMSIL's mandate includes provisions for the protection of civilians and of United Nations and associated personnel under Chapter VII of the Charter, and we appreciate the kind words of colleagues for our efforts in this regard.

United Nations peacekeepers now have the authority to act decisively and forcefully in the face of threats to civilians. This should have an important deterrent effect. A strong and robust United Nations presence will give those who would threaten defenceless civilians, including tiny children, still greater cause to consider the consequences of

their actions. UNAMSIL will also play an important role in the implementation of the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of former rebels. The successful implementation of the peace process will hinge largely on the success of the disarmament programme, and I am pleased that as of this week that important process has now been launched.

It will be essential for UNAMSIL and ECOMOG, each of which has roles to play in the disarmament process, to coordinate their activities closely to ensure that their efforts are mutually reinforcing. The coordination of the work of two international forces in Sierra Leone will pose significant challenges. But with strong command, unity of purpose and a determination to work closely together, UNAMSIL and ECOMOG should be able to carry out their important mandates successfully.

As there can be no lasting peace without justice, Canada also welcomes the incorporation of UNOMSIL's human rights unit into the new UNAMSIL. We expect the unit to continue to play a critical role in the promotion and protection of human rights, with particular emphasis on human rights monitoring in all parts of the country, and in the implementation of human rights technical cooperation programmes. The unit will complement the crucial work of the bodies established by the Lomé Agreement, particularly the truth and reconciliation commission and the human rights commission. Such human rights units are now standard components of United Nations peace support operations and constitute a practical means of enhancing human security.

While the commitment of the international community is key to the future peace and stability of Sierra Leone, so too, of course, is that of the people of Sierra Leone themselves. Ultimately, the destiny of Sierra Leone will, of course, remain in the hands of Sierra Leoneans. Canada therefore urges all parties to respect fully the provisions of the Lomé Agreement and to work together in a spirit of compromise and reconciliation.

The incorporation this week of former rebel leaders into the Government of Sierra Leone constitutes an important step in the implementation of the Lomé Agreement. We in Canada stand ready to assist so that the process of rebuilding can begin in earnest. In partnership with the international community, the people of Sierra Leone can rebuild their society. Today's establishment of UNAMSIL is an important step in that direction.

Mr. Al-Dosari (Bahrain) (*spoke in Arabic*): I would like to thank the Secretary-General for his detailed report on Sierra Leone, as well as his Special Representative, Mr. Francis Okelo, who contributed to moving the peace process forward in Sierra Leone. I would also like to thank Mr. Olara Otunnu for the valuable additional information which he provided us.

I would be remiss if I did not also express my gratitude to the members of the United Nations Mission, as well as to the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) Monitoring Group (ECOMOG), under the chairmanship of Nigeria. They have made considerable material and human sacrifices in order to bring security and stability back to Sierra Leone.

The civil war in Sierra Leone has had devastating effects on the economy and infrastructure of this country — a country which needs dozens of years and enormous financial resources to recover. The war has also caused unspeakable suffering to innocent civilians, particularly to women and children. They were prey to all types of abuse, as well as to deportation, and were deprived of basic means of subsistence, as well as of decent living conditions. In addition, they were exposed to various forms of torture and death. These abuses were carried out by the rebel forces.

The report submitted to us by Mr. Olara Otunnu shed light on the suffering endured by civilians in Sierra Leone, which prompts us to call on the international community to provide urgently needed financial assistance, as quickly as possible, to assist the people of Sierra Leone to overcome the suffering they are experiencing. There is also a need to provide adequate protection for innocent civilians.

This mission must not turn into a new political setback. If that were to take place, it would mean the demise of any hope of restoring security and stability to Sierra Leone. This is why we call on all the signatories of the Lomé Peace Agreement to scrupulously abide by the letter and spirit of that Agreement, for this is the only instrument available to us that can return peace and security to Sierra Leone.

Here I would like to welcome the constructive efforts made by the Government of Sierra Leone, headed by Mr. Ahmad Kabbah, to relaunch the peace process and bring about national reconciliation. We welcome the return to Sierra Leone of Mr. Sankoh and Mr. Koroma, whose mission will contribute to the implementation of the Lomé Agreement.

We hope that the new United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL) will effectively assist the parties to the conflict in the implementation of the Lomé Agreement and will allow for the restoration of peace and stability. This is why we shall vote in favour of the draft resolution. And here my country insists on the need for the parties to respect the safety, security and freedom of movement of members of the Mission, as well as of all international staff, especially those from emergency organizations.

The President (*spoke in Russian*): I now put to the vote the draft resolution in document S/1999/1069.

A vote was taken by show of hands.

In favour:

Argentina, Bahrain, Brazil, Canada, China, France, Gabon, Gambia, Malaysia, Namibia, Netherlands, Russian Federation, Slovenia, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United States of America

The President (*spoke in Russian*): There were 15 votes in favour. The draft resolution has been adopted unanimously as resolution 1270 (1999).

The Security Council has thus concluded the present stage of its consideration of the item on its agenda.

The Security Council will remain seized of the matter.

The meeting rose at 1.25 p.m.