

# OVERVIEW OF THE SIERRAL LEONE TRUTH & RECONCILIATION REPORT

1. After years of brutal conflict in Sierra Leone a need existed to confront the past. The nation wanted to know what precipitated the wave of vengeance and mayhem that swept across the country. How was it that the people of Sierra Leone came to turn on each other with such ferocity? Why did so many abandon traditions of community and peaceful co-existence? Why were long held and cherished customs and taboos so wantonly discarded? It is only through generating such understanding that the horrors of the past can effectively be prevented from occurring again. Knowledge and understanding are the most powerful deterrents against conflict and war.
2. The Commission accordingly recommends the widest possible dissemination of its Report and its different versions, including the Children's<sup>1</sup> and Video<sup>2</sup> versions. The Commission encourages the production of popular versions and summaries in different local languages. Dissemination committees should be organized to distribute the Report at the national and local levels. In particular, the Commission encourages the use of the Report and its different versions to promote dialogue and debate in workshops and other events around the country. The contents of the Report should be incorporated into education programmes from primary to tertiary level. The full Report and its appendixes should be made available on the internet.
3. Those who negotiated the Lomé Peace Agreement recognized that Sierra Leoneans had a need to express and acknowledge suffering, a need to relate their stories and experiences, a need to know who was behind the atrocities, a need to explain and contextualize decisions and conduct, a need to reconcile with former enemies, a need to begin personal and national healing and a need to build accountability in order to address impunity. The Lomé Peace Agreement required Sierra Leone to establish a Truth and Reconciliation Commission to meet these different needs. The Sierra Leone Parliament made provision for such a commission in early 2000 by virtue of the Truth and Reconciliation Act, 2000 (the Act).

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<sup>1</sup> Produced in collaboration with UNICEF. The Children's Version was written with the assistance of children.

<sup>2</sup> Produced by WITNESS, in collaboration with the Commission. The Video Version has been produced in English and Krio. It provides a visual account of the Commission's Report.

### *Getting Started*

4. Establishing the truth and achieving reconciliation is an ambitious project for any country struggling to overcome the bitterness of strife and war. This was particularly the case for Sierra Leone. The country was devastated by nearly a decade of civil war. Sierra Leone had become one of the poorest countries in the world. It took several years to establish the Commission. During this period, further disturbances broke out in parts of the country, which prompted the Government of Sierra Leone and the international community to establish the Special Court for Sierra Leone. The Special Court was tasked with prosecuting those who bore the greatest responsibility for serious violations of human rights. All these factors impacted on the work of the Commission.
5. The Commission was supported in its efforts to raise funds through the United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR). However, it became evident that with the limited timeframe that the Commission had to undertake its mandate and activities, donors were skeptical about its capacity to realize its funding potential at the initial proposed level of \$9.9 million. The Commission's requirements were later realigned to meet funding prospects while maintaining a credible institution. It became clear from the outset that the establishment of the Commission was beset with problems. The Commission was unable to raise sufficient funding. Less than half the funds pledged eventually found their way to the Commission.
6. Internal difficulties saw the Commission effectively losing the first 6 months of its existence. These early difficulties led to a crisis of credibility that in turn exacerbated the Commission's funding crisis. The Commission acknowledges the fact that a measure of internal mismanagement contributed to the many problems experienced by the Commission, not only during the start-up phase but also throughout the life of the Commission.
7. The Commission had to tailor its approach and processes to the constraints it faced. The Commission established two units, namely the Information Management Unit, which included the functions of investigation and research, and the Legal and Reconciliation Unit, which was largely responsible for spearheading the Commission's reconciliation activities. The Commission's activities were divided into three main phases: statement taking, hearings and report writing.

### *Themes and Historical Record*

8. Early in its life, the Commission identified certain key themes upon which it would focus its energies during its research and investigation. These themes were:
- Historical Antecedents to the Conflict
  - Governance
  - Military and Political History of the Conflict
  - Nature of the Conflict
  - Mineral Resources in the Conflict
  - External Actors in the Conflict
  - Women and the Armed Conflict
  - Children and the Armed Conflict
  - Youths and the Armed Conflict
  - The TRC and the Special Court for Sierra Leone
  - National Vision for Sierra Leone

Each theme is reflected as a chapter in this report.

9. The first objective of the Commission, as established by the Act, was to create an impartial historical record of violations and abuses of human rights and international humanitarian law related to the armed conflict in Sierra Leone. The Parliament of Sierra Leone recognized that such a record would form the basis for the task of preventing the recurrence of violence.<sup>3</sup> Several of the themes focused on by the Commission comprise the historical record of the conflict. The Commission endeavored to produce an authentic and truthful account of the conflict. The Commission does not claim to have produced the complete or exhaustive historical record of the conflict. The Commission is however satisfied that it has provided an essential story of the armed conflict, which includes an account of its main events and how it started. At times, this story accords with popular views of the conflict. At other times, the Commission's record of the conflict departs from popular history and debunks certain myths and untruths about the conflict.

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<sup>3</sup> Statement of Objects and Reasons, which was attached to the Bill when it was enacted by Parliament.

### *Causes of the Conflict*

10. While there were many factors, both internal and external, that explain the cause of the civil war, the Commission came to the conclusion that it was years of bad governance, endemic corruption and the denial of basic human rights that created the deplorable conditions that made conflict inevitable. Successive regimes became increasingly impervious to the wishes and needs of the majority. Instead of implementing positive and progressive policies, each regime perpetuated the ills and self-serving machinations left behind by its predecessor. By the start of the conflict, the nation had been stripped of its dignity. Institutional collapse reduced the vast majority of people into a state of deprivation. Government accountability was non-existent. Political expression and dissent had been crushed. Democracy and the rule of law were dead. By 1991, Sierra Leone was a deeply divided society and full of the potential for violence. It required only the slightest spark for this violence to be ignited.
  
11. The Commission highlights its finding that many of the causes of conflict that prompted thousands of young people to join the war have still not been adequately addressed. The Commission makes recommendations to strengthen the judiciary and the rule of law, as well as Parliament and the electoral system. The Commission proposes the introduction of a new transparent regime in which citizens will have reasonable access to government information, where senior public officials disclose their financial interests and where government informs people down to the community level what amounts are being spent on services and amenities.

### *The Story of the Conflict*

12. The core of the historical record is to be found in the chapter titled "Military and Political History of the Conflict". This chapter endeavours to tell the story of the conflict by charting its key events and dynamics in the military and political spheres. It begins by tracing the immediate causes of the conflict and the convergence of factors that led to the outbreak of hostilities. Thereafter, for the purposes of analysis, the chapter is divided into three distinct components, which are referred to by the Commission as 'Phases' I, II and III. Each 'phase' assumed a slightly different character, although the common underpinning was the ongoing commission of violations by all warring factions. Phase one is entitled "Conventional 'Target' Warfare" and covers the period from the outbreak of the conflict until 13th November 1993. Phase two is entitled "Guerrilla Warfare" and covers the period from 13 November 1993 until

2 March 1997. Phase three is entitled "Power Struggles and Peace Efforts" and covers the period from 2 March 1997 until the end of the conflict on 18 January 2002.

13. The story of the war reveals how Sierra Leoneans were denied their humanity. The story underscores the need for the creation of a human rights culture in Sierra Leone. A rights culture is one in which there is knowledge and recognition of the basic rights to which all human beings are entitled. A rights culture demands that we respect each other's human rights, without exception. Such a culture will only be realized once all Sierra Leoneans accept the responsibility of building it. Among its recommendations to protect human rights the Commission recommends the immediate release of all those held in safe custody detention and that such detention never be resorted to again. The Commission also recommends significant changes to the legal regime governing public emergencies.

### *Nature of the Conflict*

14. The Sierra Leonean poet, Mahomed Sekoya, wrote:

"I saw abomination between man and woman, man and man, woman and woman, adults and children. Yes I saw."<sup>4</sup>

Sierra Leone saw some of the most horrific and cruel atrocities committed by people against each other. In the chapter, "Nature of the Conflict", the Commission endeavoured to provide the context in which abuses such as amputations, sexual abuse and slavery and forced cannibalism took place. This chapter explores the nature of the violations committed and the essentially self-destructive character of the conflict.

15. The overwhelming majority of atrocities were committed by Sierra Leoneans against Sierra Leoneans. All the fighting factions targeted civilians. The Commission found the leadership of the Revolutionary United Front (RUF), the Armed Forces Revolutionary Council (AFRC), the Sierra Leone Army (SLA) and the Civil Defense Forces (CDF) to be responsible for either authorising or instigating human rights violations against civilians; alternatively for failing to stop such practices or to speak out against them. Sierra Leone was systematically plundered and looted by all factions in the conflict. The Commission found the RUF to have been responsible for the largest number of human rights violations in the conflict.

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<sup>4</sup> Extract from the poem "I Saw". Mahomed Sekoya is a contributor to the National Vision for Sierra Leone, a project of the Sierra Leone Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

### *Mineral Resources and the Armed Conflict*

16. There is a view commonly held, both within and outside Sierra Leone, that the Sierra Leone conflict was a war fought over diamonds. This is only partly true. The Commission found that the civil war in Sierra Leone was not simply a struggle for mineral resources. There were other factors that laid the grounds for the war which would have taken place even without the existence of diamonds in the country. The Commission concluded that the exploitation of diamonds was not the cause of the conflict in Sierra Leone, rather it was an element that fuelled the conflict. The Commission explains in its chapter, "Mineral Resources in the Conflict", how diamonds were used by most of the armed factions to finance and support their war efforts.

### *External Actors and the Armed Conflict*

17. Although the Sierra Leone war was one primarily fought by Sierra Leoneans, external parties played influential roles in intensifying the conflict. In the chapter, "External Actors in the Armed Conflict" the Commission explores the roles of the National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL), Charles Taylor and Libya in bringing bloody conflict to Sierra Leone. The Commission calls on Liberia to make symbolic reparation to Sierra Leone and calls on Libya to make financial contributions to the War Victims Fund.

18. The Commission also considers the different roles of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the ECOWAS Ceasefire Monitoring Group (ECOMOG), the United Liberation Movement for Democracy (ULIMO), mercenary groups such as Executive Outcomes and Sandline, the United Kingdom, the United Nations and the rest of the international community. The Commission laments the fact that the international community, apart from the ECOWAS states, declined to intervene in the unfolding human catastrophe in Sierra Leone until at a very late stage. The Commission calls on the international community to stay the course in helping to rebuild Sierra Leone.

### *Women and the Armed Conflict*

19. Women and girls became targets for abuse in the brutal conflict in Sierra Leone. They suffered abductions and exploitation at the hands of their abductions. Their vulnerability was

exploited in order to dehumanize them. Women and girls were raped, forced into sexual slavery and endured acts of sexual violence. Many suffered mutilations, torture and a host of other cruel and inhumane acts.

20. The chapter titled, "Women and the Armed Conflict", sets out the violations suffered by women and considers the current position of women in Sierra Leone. The Commission makes specific recommendations to redress the marginalization of women in the political and social life of Sierra Leone, including a minimum percentage of women to be represented in public office and as candidates in national and local government elections.

### *Children and the Armed Conflict*

21. The Commission's enabling Act required it to give special attention to the experiences of children in the armed conflict.<sup>5</sup> Children were singled out for some of the most brutal violations of human rights recorded in any conflict. The Sierra Leonean conflict was characterised by the pernicious strategy employed by most of the factions in forcing children into combat. The Commission found it most disturbing that children were the main victims in the following violations: drugging<sup>6</sup>, forced recruitment, rape, and sexual assault. The Commission found that children between the ages of 10 to 14 were specifically targeted for forced recruitment, rape, and sexual slavery.<sup>7</sup> Children were also forced, often under the threat of death, to commit a range of atrocities.
22. The Commission paid particular attention to identifying and exposing individuals and factions responsible for the violation and abuse of the rights of children.<sup>8</sup> Never again should the children of Sierra Leone be subjected to brutality.

### *Youths and the Armed Conflict*

23. The last twenty years of Sierra Leone's history is, in large part, the story of Sierra Leone's youths. Youths were the driving force behind the resistance to one party state rule in the 1980s. As students, journalists, workers and activists, they exposed injustices and the

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<sup>5</sup> Section 6(2)(b), Truth and Reconciliation Act, 2000.

<sup>6</sup> The forced consumption of drugs.

<sup>7</sup> For more detail, see the chapter entitled "Children and the Armed Conflict", Chapter 4 Volume 3B.

<sup>8</sup> See the following chapters: Children and the Armed Conflict, Military and Political History of the Conflict, Nature of the Conflict, and Findings.

bankruptcy of the ruling elite's ideology. They also bore the brunt of the state's repressive backlash. During the conflict, youths formed the bulk of the fighting forces in all the factions.

24. Many of the dire conditions that gave rise to the conflict in 1991 remain in 2004. As in the late 1980s, many young adults continue to occupy urban ghettos where they languish in a twilight zone of unemployment and despair. The Commission found that the youth in Sierra Leone were and continue to be excluded from meaningful participation in the political process. The Commission recommends the creation of a Youth Commission and a minimum percentage of youth to be represented as candidates in national and local government elections.

### *Transitional Justice in Sierra Leone*

25. The Commission worked alongside an international criminal tribunal, the Special Court for Sierra Leone. Most truth commissions have operated as an alternative to criminal prosecutions. Given the pardon and amnesty provisions of the Lomé Peace Agreement, the Commission was proposed as an alternative to criminal justice in order to establish accountability for the atrocities that had been committed during the conflict. The Special Court was created after the abandonment of the amnesty provisions (or certain of them) following breaches of the Lomé Peace Agreement by elements within the RUF.
26. The Sierra Leonean case has brought into focus the different roles of truth and reconciliation commissions and international tribunals and the potential pitfalls that may arise when they operate simultaneously. While the relationship between the Commission and the Special Court was mostly cordial, it did falter following the refusal of the Special Court to permit the Commission to hold public hearings with the detainees held in its custody. In the view of the Commission, this decision of the Special Court did not sufficiently take into account the respective roles of the two bodies. The Commission makes specific recommendations aimed at addressing some of the difficulties that it encountered in this context. These may be of value to future transitional justice initiatives.
27. The Commission holds that the right to the truth is inalienable. This right should be upheld both in national and international law. It is the exploration of the wider truth through broad-based participation that permits a nation to examine itself honestly and to take effective measures to prevent a repetition of the past.

## *Reconciliation*

28. The Commission recognizes that reconciliation is a long-term process that must occur at national, community, and individual levels. Being a process, it will take time and will need to continue even beyond the present generation. The Commission places no preconditions on the realisation of reconciliation. Reconciliation is an ongoing process that must be nurtured and promoted.
29. Reconciliation is about relationships and how to change them. Relationships of hatred, anger, frustration, alienation or indifference need to be changed into relationships of respect, co-operation and trust. Reconciliation aims at restoring the social fabric within families, communities and the nation.
30. The reconciliation process is not finished when people peacefully co-exist. Reconciliation needs to go further: people need to understand that the only future they have is a common one and that the only way forward towards development is by working together. *Working together* requires more than tolerance and respect. It requires consultation, debate and agreement, an understanding of the fact that common interests can be in conflict with personal interests and that co-operation requires compromise.
31. Among the recommendations the Commission proposes to advance reconciliation is the establishment of a national reconciliation day to be held every year on 18th January, which is the day that the war was officially declared to be over in 2002 with the symbolic burning of 3000 weapons at Lungi. The Commission offers guidelines that will facilitate reconciliation. However, it is ultimately up to all Sierra Leoneans to engage in imaginative acts that will serve the cause of reconciliation and healing at all levels.

## *Findings*

32. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission Act enjoined the Commission to make findings in relation to the causes, nature and extent of violations and abuses in respect of the armed conflict in Sierra Leone.<sup>9</sup> In particular, the Commission was mandated to deliberate on the

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<sup>9</sup> Section 6(1) read with s6(2)(a).

question of whether such violations and abuses were the result of deliberate planning, policy or authorisation by any government, group or individual.

33. The “Findings” chapter summarises the main findings of the Commission. The detailed conclusions are to be found in the different chapters of the report. The main findings are preceded by primary findings. The primary findings are the central or most important findings made by the Commission. At the end of each section addressing the role played by a particular government, faction or group, the names and positions of persons found to have been its key office-holders are listed. In circumstances where a finding pertained to the actions of the government, faction or group in question, those office-holders were by implication held responsible.
34. The Commission by necessity devoted its energies to building the totality of the story of the conflict. Although specific cases were investigated, these were events that either served to illustrate the greater story or incidents that in themselves defined the nature and course of the conflict.
35. The “Findings” chapter sets out the conclusions and findings of the Commission in relation to the following topics and themes:
  - Causes of the Conflict
  - Nature and Characteristics of the Conflict
  - Perpetrator Responsibility
  - Military and Political History (includes individual and faction specific-findings)
  - External Actors
  - The Judiciary, the Rule of Law and the Promotion of Human Rights
  - Youth
  - Children
  - Women
  - Mineral Resources
  - TRC and the Special Court for Sierra Leone
36. The Commission commenced its primary findings with the conclusion that the conflict and the independence period preceding it represented the most shameful years of Sierra Leone’s history. These periods reflected an extraordinary failure of leadership on the part of many of

those involved in government, public life and civil society. No enlightened and visionary leaders emerged to steer the country away from the slide into chaos and bloody civil war.

### *Recommendations*

37. The Commission was required to make recommendations concerning reforms and measures, whether legal, political, administrative or otherwise, needed to achieve the object of the Commission; namely preventing the repetition of violations or abuses suffered, addressing impunity, responding to the needs of victims and promoting healing and reconciliation.
38. These proposed measures contained in the Recommendations chapter are designed to facilitate the building of a new Sierra Leone based on the values of human dignity, tolerance and respect for the rights of all persons. In particular, the recommendations are intended to help create an open and vibrant democracy in which all are treated as equal before the law.
39. The legacies of dehumanization, hatred and fear must be confronted on the basis that there is a need for tolerance, not prejudice; a need for acknowledgment, not recrimination; a need for reparation, not retribution; a need for community, not victimisation; a need for understanding, not suspicion; and a need for reconstruction, not greed.
40. The Act requires that the Government shall faithfully and timeously implement the recommendations of the report that are directed to state bodies and encourage or facilitate the implementation of any recommendations that may be directed to others. The Government of Sierra Leone is accordingly required to take all reasonable steps within its means to implement the recommendations. Such steps should be taken promptly and without unreasonable delay.
41. The Act further requires that the Government shall, upon the publication of the report of the Commission, establish a Follow-up Committee to monitor the implementation of the recommendations of the Commission and to facilitate their implementation. The effect of the law is to invite the closest scrutiny of the Government's response to the recommendations made by the Commission, not only by the Follow-up Committee, but also by civil society.
42. In the light of the mandatory obligation imposed on the Government, the Commission has been mindful of its heavy responsibility to make recommendations that are indeed capable of

being implemented. In making its recommendations the Commission has been slow to enter the arena of governmental discretion with regard to what government programmes should be initiated and how they should be implemented. The Commission opted to focus on recommendations that serve to establish and safeguard rights, principles and values consistent with its mandate.

43. In order to give practical effect to its approach, the Commission divided its recommendations into three categories, namely "Imperative", "Work Towards" and "Seriously Consider". "Imperative" recommendations are those which fall strictly within the faithful and timeous obligations as required by the Act. Such recommendations tend to be those that establish and uphold rights and values and ought to be implemented immediately or as soon as possible. The "Work Towards" recommendations tend to be those that require in-depth planning and the marshalling of resources in order to ensure their fulfillment. Government is expected to put in place the building blocks to make the ultimate fulfillment of the recommendation possible and to do so within a reasonable time period. In the "Seriously Consider" category, while the Government is expected to thoroughly evaluate the recommendation, it is under no obligation to implement the recommendation.
44. The Commission provides specific guidelines to the Follow-up Committee with respect to the monitoring required in the three categories of recommendations. The Commission, at times, calls on institutions that do not form part of the Executive or Legislative arm of government, non-governmental bodies, and members of the international community to implement certain recommendations. In these circumstances, the Commission "calls on" the body in question to implement the recommendation. For ease of reference, the Recommendations chapter ends with tables in which every recommendation made by the Commission is reflected under columns representing the different categories of recommendations.
45. The recommendations cover the following areas and themes: the Protection of Human Rights, Establishing the Rule of Law, the Security Services, Promoting Good Governance, Fighting Corruption, Youth, Women, Children, External Actors, Mineral Resources, The Commission and the Special Court, Reparations, Reconciliation, National Vision for Sierra Leone, Archiving, Dissemination of The Commission's Report, and the Follow-Up Committee.
46. The Commission's recommendations are based on the findings it reached. The introduction to the Recommendations chapter highlights the Commission's central or core recommendations. These include:

- The call upon leaders at all levels to commit themselves to new principles of committed leadership;
- A call on all those in the public sector to usher in a new culture of ethics and service to fight the scourge of corruption which saps the life-force of Sierra Leone;
- The enshrining of the right to human dignity and the abolition of the death penalty;
- The upholding of the freedom of expression which is the lifeblood of a vibrant democracy;
- The introduction of a common and equitable citizenship which will promote a new patriotism and devotion to Sierra Leone;
- Recommendations to strengthen democracy, the rule of law and institutions of accountability;
- New principles of National Security, which reflect the will of Sierra Leoneans to live in peace and harmony;
- Recommendations to bring government and service delivery to people throughout Sierra Leone.

### *Reparations Programme*

47. The Commission's enabling Act required it to make recommendations concerning the measures needed to respond to the needs of victims. The Commission proposes that the Reparations programme be co-ordinated by the National Commission for Social Action (NaCSA). It is envisaged that NaCSA as the "Implementing Body" entrusted with governing the Special Fund for War Victims, will ensure the decentralisation of programmes in conjunction with different Ministries. It is proposed further that NaCSA be assisted by an Advisory Committee. The Commission recommends that the proposed National Human Rights Commission perform the role of the Advisory Committee.

48. The Commission's recommended measures deal with the needs of victims in the following areas: health, pensions, education, skills training and micro credit, community reparations and symbolic reparations. The Commission also makes recommendations to redress the wrongs suffered by those who were politically persecuted while they held public office.

49. The Commission decided to propose a programme to address and respond to the specific needs of victims, rather than recommending cash handouts. With regard to certain

categories of victims, such as amputees, war wounded and victims of sexual violence, the Commission recommends that they be given free physical (and where necessary, mental) healthcare for the rest of their lives or to the extent that their injury or disability demands. The Commission recommends that a monthly pension be paid to all adult amputees, other war wounded who experienced a 50% or more reduction in earning capacity as a result of their injury, and victims of sexual violence. The amounts of such pensions should be determined by NaCSA.

50. The Commission recommends that there should be free education until senior secondary level for specific groups affected by the conflict. Those eligible should include children who are amputees, other war wounded, and victims of sexual violence; children who were abducted or conscripted; orphans of the war; and children of amputees, other war wounded who experienced a 50% reduction in earning capacity as a result of their injuries, and victims of sexual violence.<sup>10</sup>

### *National Vision for Sierra Leone*

We will drag ourselves out of this poverty zone  
 And we'll care for our own, our Sierra Leone  
 We will raise up our hearts and our voices as one<sup>11</sup>

51. The Commission looked to the past in order to tell the story of the civil war and to make recommendations to prevent a repetition of conflict. The Commission also looked to the future for the purpose of describing the kind of future post-conflict society that the recommendations were designed to achieve. The Commission called on Sierra Leoneans to tell the Commission what future society they envisaged for their country.

52. The Commission and its Commissioners were overwhelmed by the effort, time and resources that so many Sierra Leoneans devoted to preparing their contributions. Among the contributors were adults and children of different backgrounds, religions and regions, artists and laymen, amputees, ex-combatants and prisoners. The contributions include written and recorded essays, slogans, plays and poems; paintings, etchings and drawings; sculptures,

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<sup>10</sup> Only certain aspects of the reparations programme are highlighted here. For the full programme, including qualifications, see the Reparations Programme chapter.

<sup>11</sup> Extract from "My Vision, My Home, My Sierra Leone" by Ustina More

wood carvings, installations and even a sea-worthy boat. The contributions form part of the national heritage of Sierra Leone.

53. While most contributors worked separately, a number of common themes and forms emerged. Although the Commission asked Sierra Leoneans to speak about the future; the majority of contributions received addressed the future by making reference to the past. The contributions speak of struggle and hope. They point to the need for basic respect and tolerance among all human beings. Some of the contributions set out prerequisites for a future peaceful and prosperous Sierra Leone, while others point to the severe problems facing Sierra Leone. They serve as signposts for the future; signposts that we ignore at our peril.
54. The National Vision has provided an exciting opportunity for individual Sierra Leoneans to contribute their ideas and talent to the process of peace and reconciliation. Through the National Vision, Sierra Leoneans of all ages and backgrounds may claim their own citizenship space in the new Sierra Leone and make their contributions to the country's cultural and national heritage. Most of all, the contributions show what Sierra Leone can be. They show the enormous potential that exists – potential that must be harnessed positively and productively. In the words of one contributor, Wurie Mamadu Tamba Barrie:

*“The inspiration is let’s sprint, if we can’t sprint, let’s run, if we can’t run, let’s walk, if we also can’t walk, then let’s crawl, but in any way possible, let’s keep on moving”.*