

**Inauguration of the Sierra Leone Institute for International Law  
24 April 2009**

**Ambassador Allieu I. Kanu**

- I would like once again to extend a very warm welcome and heartfelt thanks to all of you for attending this august meeting, which I believe will be the start of something very special, and very important for Sierra Leone and the region.
- It is very fitting that we are holding this inauguration at the premises of the Special Court for Sierra Leone. The Special Court is quite unique among international justice institutions for its strong operational underpinning that it is a service provider that has been tailored, and continues to be tailored, for the people of Sierra Leone. This is evident in the groundbreaking work it is doing on legacy: the fact that the Court's legacy is something it has been concerned about from the very beginning sets the Special Court miles apart from any international court that has come before it, and sets the bar very high for those that is coming after it.
- And the reason why I say it is fitting we are holding this inauguration here is because I very much view the Sierra Leone Institute for International Law as a concrete manifestation of the legacy of the Special Court. The Special Court is not responsible for the Institute, but its presence in the country has greatly contributed to the interest of Sierra Leoneans across the country in international law, and helped create the conditions from within which the Institute is today being born.
- Those conditions include a rule of law that has been much strengthened since it was thrown into despair during the last decade of the last century. And the first tentative steps into this century were not

so promising for the rule of law either: we began the twenty-first century in this country with a mixture of hope and fear in our hearts. Hope that things would change and fear that they would not. Hope that peace and justice would prevail, and fear that they would not.

- Then along came the idea of the Special Court, the idea that international justice could be our shield and things began to change. Indeed, the weapons burning ceremony marking the end of the war took place only a few days after the signing of the Special Court Agreement between Sierra Leone and the United Nations here in Freetown.
- Never before has the link between peace and justice been so clear. Let it stand as a reminder and as an admonition to those who would seek to drive a wedge between the two.
- Let it also stand as a testament to the very real impact that international law can have on the lives of individuals, in the betterment of the human condition and on helping countries, which in the end are made up of individuals, achieve sustainable peace and prosperity. All this is made possible by a robust rule of law.
- What do I mean by this? Simply put, the rule of law embodies the basic principles of equal treatment for all people before the law; fairness; and both legal and actual guarantees of basic human rights.
- A predictable legal system with a participatory law-making process, impartial law enforcement mechanisms and a fair, transparent and effective adjudication system is essential to the credibility of the law as a means to protect individuals against lawless acts of private individuals and organisations or the arbitrary use of State authority.
- The basic concepts underpinning the Rule of Law could be summarised as follows:

1. The Rules both apply and are applied to everyone;
  2. These Rules are known or can be known by anyone;
  3. Everyone has access to effective means of recourse.
- These basic principles are as important, if not more so, in the context of what we might describe as an “international rule of law”, or strengthening the rule of law through application of the basic principles of international law and, in particular, international criminal law.
  - A strong rule of law, internationally and domestically, requires a strong foundation and fair and effective application of legal rules. And it requires strong institutions to develop, support, strengthen and defend legal rules.
  - The Sierra Leone Institute for International Law is intended to do just that. The Sierra Leone Institute for International Law, established and operating in Freetown, will create a vehicle through which the interest of Sierra Leoneans and others in the region on an international rule of law can be further explored.
  - The Institute will be a centre for academic excellence on international law in Sierra Leone and the region and will focus on the promotion of fundamental principles of international law and its progressive development.
  - I would like to thank everyone who has joined me in bringing this idea to fruition and to thank everyone who has given their support to it.
  - I am very proud to be here with all of you today, both those who are here in person and those who have expressed their support through their messages, particularly the Institute’s first President and Vice-President.

- Without any further ado, I hereby declare the Sierra Leone Institute for International Law officially inaugurated.
- We look forward to working with you all in the coming years, thank you again for your support, and look forward to welcoming you at our next event. And now that we are officially open for business, do join us as a member and tell us what you think about which areas of international law should be our focus!
- Thank you