

Statement delivered by the Honorable Vice President of the Republic of Sierra Leone Dr. Victor Bockari Foh, Head of Delegation to the 21st Conference of the Parties (COP 21/CMP 11) to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change in Paris, November 30 to 11 December 2015

Mr. President,
Excellences, Ministers of Government,
Distinguished Delegates,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

On behalf of the President and the people of the Republic of Sierra Leone, I wish to take this opportunity to express our profound condolences on the loss of life and property as a result of the recent terrorist attack in Paris. Our thoughts and prayers are with the government and people of France. We also wish to convey our sincere gratitude to the Government of France for hosting this Conference and for the hospitality given to my delegation since we arrived in this beautiful city of Paris.

Mr. President

Sierra Leone is among the third most vulnerable countries in the world to the impacts of climate change, and as a Least Developed Country with a historically low emission of greenhouse gases suffers disproportionately from the impacts of climate change. Having won the fight against the Ebola pandemic that left an indelible mark on our country, the flash flood of sixteenth September, 2015 hit the city of Freetown with loss of life, property and displacement of over nine thousand people. The resettlement of these affected flood victims has had an immense toll on the country's economy. This impact has significantly distorted our economic trajectory which was among the fastest growing economies in the World in 2013.

Mr. President

In response to the decisions adopted at the Nineteenth and Twentieth sessions of the conference of the parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on climate change, Sierra Leone submitted its intended nationally determined contributions, which in addition to its green growth development pathway as enshrined in the national Agenda for Prosperity is a firm commitment to limit warming to at least 1.5 degree Celsius.

MR. President

Sierra Leone aligns with the positions of the Least Developed Countries, the African Group and the G77 and China here in Paris. We call on all state Parties to reach an international legally-binding agreement in order to achieve an acceptable stabilization limit of greenhouse gas emissions and to avoid untold suffering from the devastating effects of irreversible climate change impacts.

Mr. President

We fully support the established negotiating tracts and sincerely hope these negotiations will culminate into a balanced legally binding agreement demonstrating clear commitment from all Parties to sustain long term action to fight climate change. In particular, the following issues are of significant concern to Sierra Leone.

First, adaptation to and mitigation of climate change should be given high and equal priority for Least Developed Countries, if we are to achieve the sustainable development goals and poverty reduction.

Second, Financial and technological support should be given to vulnerable countries to offset the adverse impacts of climate change

through technological cooperation and building of the necessary human and institutional capacities.

Third, Sierra Leone urges developed countries to provide incentives to low emitting economies like ours to help us continue to develop on a low emission pathway, and to support the development of clean development mechanism (CDM) projects with clear rules and guidelines on fast track financing.

Fourth, the promotion of research and systematic observation and climate change education, training and public awareness is crucial for Least Developed countries.

Fifth, Sierra Leone urges parties to integrate the issues of loss and damage into the final negotiated agreement as a response measure to the catastrophic impacts of climate change.

Mr. President

Sierra Leone recognizes that mainstreaming of gender across the whole spectrum of issues in the negotiating text is essential in meeting the climate challenges and achieving the long term objective of a global agreement on climate change.

Mr. President, Distinguished Delegates, ladies and Gentlemen,

In closing, let me implore our friends from the developed countries to take full advantage of our intended actions and provide the catalytic instruments in the form of technical and independent, predictable, sustained and accessible financial resources so that the objectives of the new global agreement can be achieved. Let me assure this conference of Sierra Leone's unwavering cooperation for the best outcome of this 21st Conference of the Parties.

I thank you for your attention.