

Sierra Leone

The July 2007 presidential and parliamentary elections in Sierra Leone, which led to the election of Ernest Bai Koroma as president, were a watershed in the country's effort to recover from years of brutal conflict. The elections—the first since the withdrawal of UN peacekeepers in December 2005—were a real test of the country's ability to manage its affairs without the presence of international troops. Sierra Leone's national electoral commission was applauded for conducting what most local and international observers described as free and fair elections, despite some isolated cases of fraud and violence. However, the new government inherits a society characterized by high unemployment, especially among youths; the absence of basic social services such as health-care and electricity; high levels of corruption; and ethnic polarization, especially during the election periods. Despite these challenges, the security situation remained stable, except for isolated election-related violence. The arrest and subsequent transfer to The Hague of Liberia's former president Charles Taylor removed a lingering security concern for Sierra Leone and the West African subregion as a whole.

Major Developments

Sierra Leone descended into chaos following the outbreak of conflict in 1991. The war, unmatched in recent times in terms of brutality, lasted for eleven years, claimed the lives of an estimated 55,000 victims, and displaced over 60 percent of the country's population. During this period, the country played host to peace operations led by the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the

UN Integrated Office in Sierra Leone (UNIOSIL)

• Authorization Date	31 August 2005 (UNSC Res. 1620)
• Start Date	1 January 2006
• ERSG	Victor da Silva Angelo (Portugal)
• Chief Military Liaison Officer	Colonel Sven-Olof Broman (Sweden)
• Senior Police Advisor	Rudolfo Landeros (United States)
• Budget	\$23.3 million (1 January–31 December 2007)
• Strength as of 31 October 2007	Military Observers: 14 Police: 26 International Civilian Staff: 75 Local Civilian Staff: 199 UN Volunteers: 24

For detailed mission information see p. 273.

United Nations. Launched in 1999, the UN Assistance Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL) played a major role in supporting elections in 2002, and in the restoration of security and state authority across the country, including through a disarmament and demobilization program for 76,000 former fighters. The last UNAMSIL troops departed Sierra Leone in December 2005, and the UN Integrated Office in Sierra Leone (UNIOSIL) was established in its place, with a mandate to support the government in consolidating the hard-won peace.

UNIOSIL provided crucial support to the national electoral commission as it prepared for the July 2007 elections. It worked with the political parties and collaborated with the UN Development Programme (UNDP) and Sierra Leone's national journalists association to develop a code of conduct for the

country's media, a crucial step given that both print and radio played a central role in informing public opinion in the run-up to elections. In other areas, a national human rights commission was established as part of efforts to implement the recommendations of the Sierra Leone Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

Trials by the Special Court for Sierra Leone of those believed most responsible for serious human rights abuses during the conflict concluded in convictions against the accused from two of three sets of indictees. In June, the court sentenced three former members of the Armed Forces Ruling Council—the military junta that seized power in 1997—to jail terms ranging from forty-five to fifty years each. This was followed in October by sentences of six to eight years for two members of the Civil Defense Force militia, the Kamajors. The third accused from the Civil Defense Force—Sam Hinga Norman—died on 22 February while receiving medical treatment in Dakar, Senegal. The trial of the leaders of the Revolutionary United Front continued, while that of former Liberian president Charles Taylor resumed in January 2008.

A further development during the year in review was the UN Peacebuilding Commission's engagement with Sierra Leone, which continued to progress. The government of Sierra Leone identified four priority areas for its engagement with the Peacebuilding Commission: youth employment and empowerment, justice and security sector reform, democracy consolidation and good governance, and capacity building. Meanwhile, the gov-

ernment and the Peacebuilding Commission agreed on a timeline for creating an integrated peacebuilding strategy, and the Peacebuilding Fund allocated \$35 million to Sierra Leone. By October 2007, seven projects had been approved under two priority areas—justice and security, and youth empowerment and employment—amounting to over \$16 million.

Meanwhile, Sierra Leone made a modest but significant contribution to international peacekeeping. The country deployed three military observers—one to Timor-Leste and two to Nepal—and plans are under way for the deployment of several military observers to Darfur. While the number of personnel may appear negligible, the significance of the contribution should be considered against the backdrop of the country's recent troubled past.

The credibility with which the July elections and the subsequent run-off were conducted was a major step toward consolidating peace and democracy in Sierra Leone. Elected on a platform of change, the new government must confront the monumental challenges of revamping the country's economy, creating jobs, especially for the restive youth, and most importantly, restoring confidence in public institutions. While the new government has pledged to address these issues with the urgency that they require, continued cooperation with the international community remains crucial to the consolidation of peace in the country. In December, the Security Council extended the mandate of UNIOSIL for the final nine months, after which the mission will cease its operations in the country.