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ORAL STATEMENT  
Item 6:  
Consideration of UPR reports: Sierra Leone

UN Human Rights Council  
48th session  
13 September – 8 October 2021

Madam President,

Amnesty International welcomes the acceptance of at least 218 out of 274 recommendations received by Sierra Leone in its third review, aimed at improving the human rights landscape in the country.<sup>1</sup>

In particular, we welcome the recent abolition of the death penalty, as recommended by several states,<sup>2</sup> and to expedite the Gender Equality Bill, currently awaiting Parliamentary debate and approval.<sup>3</sup> We also applaud Sierra Leone's reported change of position to accept a recommendation to enact legislation for the protection of human rights defenders.<sup>4</sup>

Madam President,

We are however appalled that Sierra Leone has not accepted numerous recommendations on the eradication of female genital mutilation (FGM) which is a violation of the rights of women and girls.<sup>5</sup> This entrenched cultural practice has resulted in a huge drop out of girls from schools, promoted early and forced marriage and often results in preventable maternal death.

We are also concerned at the slow progress in the implementation of recommendations made in the previous review on expediting the constitutional review.<sup>6</sup> Although there is a cabinet

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<sup>1</sup> UN Human Rights Council, Report of the Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review: Sierra Leone, UN Doc. A/HRC/48/17, 22 July 2021 and UN Doc. A/HRC/48/17/Add.1

<sup>2</sup> UN Doc A/HRC/48/17, Recommendations 143.8 (Latvia, Chile); 143.10 (Finland); 143.61-79 (Australia, France, Iceland, Mexico, Italy, Portugal, Albania, Cote d'Ivoire, Germany, Ireland, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, Brazil, Costa Rica, Denmark, Latvia, Holy See, Uruguay, Paraguay)

<sup>3</sup> UN Doc A/HRC/48/17, Recommendations 143.233-244 (Iceland, Albania) and 143.246 (South Africa)

<sup>4</sup> UN Doc A/HRC/48/17, Recommendation 143.111 (Ukraine). Information on change of position received by Amnesty International from the Office of the Attorney General and Ministry of Justice

<sup>5</sup> UN Doc A/HRC/48/17, Recommendations 143.175-179 (Timor-Leste, Angola, Argentina, Armenia, Australia), 143.181 -185 (Burkina Faso, Burundi, Canada, Chad, Plurinational State of Bolivia), 143.188 (Cote d'Ivoire), 143.190 (Croatia), 143.192-200 (Czechia, Denmark, Djibouti, Ukraine, Egypt, Eswatini, Fiji, France, Gabon), 143.203-207 (Georgia, Germany, Ghana, Ireland), 143.209-212 (Kenya, Latvia, Lebanon), 143.215 (Mexico), 143.217-221 (Namibia, Nepal, Netherlands, South African, Spain), 124.223-224 (Sweden, Peru), 143.226 (Portugal), 143.118-119 (Rwanda, Zambia), 143.231 (Slovenia)

<sup>6</sup> UN Human Rights Council, Thirty-second session, Report of the Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review: Sierra Leone, UN Doc. A/HRC/32/16, 14 April 2016

conclusion on the recommendations, we urge that the process be fast tracked in order to implement accepted recommendations from the second and third UPR reviews.

Madam President,

In closing, we wish to express our regret that, once again, Sierra Leone merely noted recommendations to adopt measures to guarantee the human rights of the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex persons and to decriminalize same-sex relations between consenting adults.<sup>7</sup> We call on Sierra Leone to reconsider its position on these recommendations.

Thank you.

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<sup>7</sup> UN Doc A/HRC/48/17, Recommendations 143.47-53 (Australia, Canada, Iceland, Italy, United States of America, Spain, Spain)