

## REMARKS TO THE MEDIA

### **Visit of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for West Africa and the Sahel, Mohamed Ibn Chambas, to Sierra Leone, 6 to 8 November 2016**

I have just concluded a three-day visit to Sierra Leone, during which I had a fruitful exchange of views with various stakeholders in the context of the preparations for the presidential and parliamentary elections due to take place in early 2018.

The purpose of my mission was to consult on the level of preparedness and the challenges to the electoral process and how the United Nations could accompany the people of Sierra Leone at this important juncture in the country's democratic journey.

During my visit, I held consultations with the National Electoral Commission, which has the responsibility for the organization of the upcoming polls. I met with members of the Diplomatic Corps and had discussions with political parties and members of civil society. I also had the opportunity to exchange views with the Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation and the Minister of Internal Affairs, and I was received in audience by His Excellency the President of the Republic of Sierra Leone, whom I briefed on my exchanges.

In the course of my discussions, I underlined the confidence of the Secretary-General of the United Nations in Sierra Leone's democratic system and its capacity to organize peaceful, credible, and participatory elections.

It is significant to note that Sierra Leone's 2018 elections will come at the end of a series of eight recent successful elections in West Africa.

In all my encounters, I recalled that in 2012 the people of Sierra Leone managed to hold elections, which were widely praised as peaceful, transparent, and credible. I expressed my conviction that Sierra Leone will build on this achievement and maintain a conducive environment, ensuring a level playing field, for transparent, peaceful, and credible polls in 2018.

In this vein, it will be important to scale up preparations for the polls and not to be distracted from the need to meet constitutionally required timelines.

I wish to commend the National Electoral Commission for its outreach efforts, and want to encourage dialogue between political actors and other stakeholders. I equally urge civil society, the private sector as well as the media to be aware of their important responsibilities, and encourage youth and women to participate actively in the process.

I call upon the security services to undertake their responsibilities for securing the electoral process and protecting political activists and leaders with professionalism and impartiality.


The United Nations will pursue its collaboration with the people of Sierra Leone, whom I would like to commend for its resilience displayed during difficult times such as in the fight against the Ebola crisis. At this crucial moment, we are confident that the upcoming elections will mark another milestone in Sierra Leone's aspiration for the consolidation of democratic governance and sustainable development.

I thank you very much for your attention.

Freetown, 8 November 2016

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