



Special Court for Sierra Leone
Press and Public Affairs Office

PRESS RELEASE

Freetown, Sierra Leone, 21 October 2004

Special Court President Addresses Sierra Leonean Students

The President of the Special Court, Justice Emmanuel Ayoola, told a group of students in Freetown Thursday that they should work for the restoration of justice in their country.

Justice Ayoola, who is a Judge of the Appeals Chamber, along with Special Court Registrar Robin Vincent, visited the Vine Memorial Secondary School for Girls, marking the first time that a Court President has participated in an Outreach event.

Mr Vincent fielded questions from students and teachers, ranging from why some persons were indicted and not others, whether the Court intended to compensate victims of Sierra Leone's civil war, why it was decided to locate the Court in Sierra Leone, and whether students could attend Court proceedings.

The Registrar noted that one of the biggest complaints about other tribunals was the fact that they were situated in third countries, inaccessible to many of those who had been affected. Mr Vincent extended a personal invitation to the girls to attend trials at the Special Court.

"It's your Court," he told them.

Justice Ayoola then drew applause when he praised the quality of the students' questions and jokingly suggested that the students present should receive double promotion. Then, speaking seriously, he urged them to work to restore their country to its former grandeur.

"We know about the present and past of Sierra Leone. You are the future," he told them.

Mr Ayoola related how, in 1946, his elder brother had received a huge send off when he departed from Nigeria to study at Sierra Leone's renowned Fourah Bay College.



“You bear the greatest responsibility for restoring the glory of Sierra Leone,” he said. “From what I have seen this afternoon, it can be entrusted in your hands.”

Said Mr Ayoola: “Sierra Leone is in the forefront, anywhere in Africa, of submitting itself to the challenges of the rule of law. Sierra Leoneans can be very proud of themselves.”

The Judge stressed that one of the important tenets of the rule of law is “not condemning anybody without giving them the chance to defend themselves.”

#END

The Special Court is an independent tribunal established jointly by the United Nations and the Government of Sierra Leone. It is mandated to bring to justice those who bear the greatest responsibility for atrocities committed in Sierra Leone after 30 November 1996. To date, the Prosecutor has indicted eleven persons on various charges of war crimes, crimes against humanity, and other serious violations of international humanitarian law. Nine indictees are currently in the custody of the Court.

INFORMATION FOR MEDIA - NOT FOR ADVERTISING

Produced by the
Press and Public Affairs Office
Special Court for Sierra Leone
Mobile: 232 76 655 237
Email: SCSL-pressoffice@un.org

Visit our website at www.sc-sl.org