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## **SIERRA LEONE**

### **34<sup>th</sup> SESSION OF THE HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL**

**Side event on the:**

**Universal participation to the UN Human Rights Council:  
Impact and ways of reinforcement of the actions undertaken with the Trust Fund  
for the participation of Least Developed Countries and Small Island Developing  
States**

### **STATEMENT BY AMBASSADOR YVETTE STEVENS**

9 March 2017

I would like to begin by thanking the Moderator for giving me the floor and the distinguished panellists for their interventions.

The important role the Voluntary Trust Fund can play in assisting countries meet their human rights commitments and obligations has already been highlighted by the speakers here today.

The assistance has certainly been invaluable to an LDC like Sierra Leone which has a small delegation in Geneva and limited capacity to fully participate in all the human rights meetings during the various sessions.

It is important to remember that at its inception five years ago, the Trust Fund was created to support the participation of SIDS and LDCs in the work of the Council. Without it, there are many delegations who would not have been able to attend the Human Rights Council sessions and thereafter have a better understanding of the work it does and why it is important in the national context. It is also important in enabling the delegates who are selected through a rigorous process to be able to return to their countries and use the knowledge gained to better inform the work that is done in their capitals as regards their reporting commitments and human rights obligation. This could include UPR reports or treaty body obligations.

In spite of budgetary constraints, the Fund has soldiered on and is continuing to assist countries who have sent representatives, including one from Sierra Leone, to the Council sessions. Their program was not just about attending meetings but more about learning the intricacies of human rights in its varied manifestations and thereafter, being able to deal with situational issues so that if the need arises, they could competent and able to advise their governments.

Many countries have complained that there is often a dichotomy between what is done in Geneva and what is understood in the capitals. Without attending the sessions or becoming engaged on issues that would have a future impact on national policies, it is hard to understand why the work of the Council matters both at the micro and macro levels.

Not having a voice should never be taken to mean acquiescence. Through the Voluntary Funds, SIDS can now attend negotiations on the impact of climate change on their national territories and LDCs can share their opinions on illicit funds or on why the right to development is important from a regional perspective.

This year marks the fifth anniversary of the Trust Fund (to Support the Participation of Least Developed Countries (LDCs) and Small Island Developing States (SIDS) in the work of the Human Rights Council). I call on States to support the draft resolution which will be submitted for the consideration of the Council later this month.

If the participation in the HRC would allow for greater engagement of all States, States must be enabled to do so.

Thank you.