



**SIERRA LEONE'S ACCESSION TO THE NEW YORK CONVENTION:
Significance, Opportunities, Challenges and the Next Steps
25 February 2021, 10:00 – 15:15 GMT
Radisson Blu Hotel, Freetown and Via Zoom**

INVITATION

The Center for International Law and Policy in Africa (CILPA) and the Sierra Leone Bar Association (SLBA) invite you to a workshop on Sierra Leone's landmark accession to the New York Convention. Please confirm your attendance at info@cilpa.org.

CONCEPT

On 28 October 2020, Sierra Leone deposited the instrument of ratification to the Secretary-General of the United Nations, the depositary of the *Convention on the Recognition and Enforcement of Foreign Arbitral Awards* (the New York Convention), signifying the country's accession to 'the most successful treaty in private international law' adopted in New York on 10 June 1958. The Government of Sierra Leone (GoSL) also lodged a declaration and reservation on reciprocity, commercial reservation and non-retroactive application of the Convention. The Convention entered into force for Sierra Leone on 26 January 2021 in accordance with its article XII (2).

With recognition that the enforcement of foreign arbitral awards is seen as an important tool to protect investors and to promote foreign direct investment, Sierra Leone's accession to the New York Convention had been a key national priority. The accession should usher in, as a matter of high priority, the establishment of a new legislative framework for domestic and international commercial arbitrations. As Sierra Leone applies international law from a dualist perspective in accordance with the Section 40(4)(d) of the Constitution of Sierra Leone (Act. No. 6 of 1991), the expression of consent by the GoSL to join the New York Convention Contracting States Parties should be complemented by the necessary legal and policy framework to allow for effective domestic implementation.

The process of implementing the New York Convention in Sierra Leone will be greatly assisted with a focused consideration of the lessons learned from other African countries that are already parties to the Convention and the following critical issues/questions:

1. What is the state of preparedness for effective domestic implementation following the entry into force of the Convention on 26 January 2021 for Sierra Leone? In this regard, what is the status of the draft Arbitration Bill? Is there need for further revision of the Bill? Are the relevant rules of the High Court applicable to New York Convention arbitral awards recognition and enforcement? Are legal practitioners and end-users (the business community) well informed to activate the attendant benefits of domesticating the Convention?
2. What are the legal implications (specific to the Convention and General International Law) relating to the declaration and reservations by the GoSL?
3. What are the next steps on implementing the Convention and arbitration practice in Sierra Leone?

We anticipate various perspectives on the above, and hope that the speakers, panelists and participants will shed light on the topic, in order to foster a full understanding of the meaning and implication of Sierra Leone's accession of the New York Convention.



PROGRAM – 25 February 2021

10:00 | 10:05 **Opening Remarks (Chair)**

Ms. Eddinia Michaela Swallow - President, Sierra Leone Bar Association

10:05 | 10:15 **Introductory Remarks**

Prof. Dr. Charles C. Jalloh - Founding President, CILPA and Professor of Law, Florida International University and Member, UN International Law Commission

10:15 | 10:40 **Statements – (7 minutes per speaker)**

Hon. Justice Desmond Babatunde Edwards - Chief Justice of Sierra Leone

Hon. Dr. Abass Chernor Bundu - Speaker of Parliament of Sierra Leone

H.E. Ms. Anna Joubin-Bret - Secretary of the UN Commission on International Trade Law (UNCITRAL)

10: 40 | 10: 55 **Keynote:**

Hon. Anthony Y. Brewah Esq. - Attorney-General and Minister of Justice of Sierra Leone

11:00 | 12:00 **Panel Discussion**

TOPIC: Sierra Leone's Accession to the New York Convention: Significance, Opportunities, Challenges and the Next Steps

Moderator: Mr. Ibrahim S. Yillah Esq. - Residual Special Court for Sierra Leone and Member, Law Reform Commission Sub-Committee on the Arbitration Bill

Panelists

Justice Glenna Thompson - Justice of the Supreme Court of Sierra Leone

Ms. Judith Knieper - Legal Officer, UNCITRAL

Ms. Christina G. Hioureas - Partner, Chair, United Nations Practice Group of Foley Hoag LLP, New York

Mr. Sulaiman Kabba Koroma Esq. - Legal Practitioner

Tea/Coffee Break

Workshop: 12:30 | 14: 15

Part I - Breakout sessions to focus on specific part(s) of the Arbitration Bill

Part II - Reporting and Closing Rapporteur: General Secretary, SLBA

14:15 | 14: 45 Lunch

14:45: | 15:10 Certificate distribution ceremony

15:10 | 15:15 Closing Remarks:

H.E. Dr. Michael Imran Kanu - Ambassador & DPR of Sierra Leone to the UN