



CONCEPT NOTE

Twentieth Anniversary Commemoration and Formal Opening of the Peace Museum Memorial Garden

On 16 January 2002, the United Nations and the Government of the Republic of Sierra Leone signed an historic agreement providing for the establishment of a Special Court for Sierra Leone (SCSL). This happened two days before the burning of arms on 18 January, to mark the end of the 11-year armed conflict. The mandate of the SCSL was to prosecute those persons bearing greatest responsibility for war crimes, crimes against humanity and other serious violations of international humanitarian law as well Sierra Leonean law committed during the conflict in Sierra Leone after 30 November 1996.

The SCSL would go on to investigate, prosecute and convict several leaders from the three main warring factions in the Sierra Leone conflict as well as the former president of Liberia, Charles Taylor. Most of the convicts received lengthy prison sentences. All but one of them was transferred to Rwanda to serve their sentences, pursuant to an enforcement of sentence agreement between the SCSL and the Government of Rwanda. In addition to its trials, which were completed in December 2013, the SCSL is widely recognized for introducing a more credible hybrid or mixed ad hoc tribunal model of accountability for international crimes and for its contribution of important judicial precedents to the development of international criminal law and justice.

16 January 2022 would mark the twentieth anniversary of the signing, in the Sierra Leonean capital Freetown, of the first bilateral treaty between the United Nations and one of its member states providing for the innovative a) establishment of an ad hoc penal tribunal to prosecute atrocity crimes, b) using a mix of national and international law, as well as c) employing a mix of national and international prosecutors, judges and staff. On that occasion, the Residual Special Court for Sierra Leone together with the Center for International Law and Policy in Africa, will convene a commemoration of that historic moment as well as the end of the war in the march forward for the rule of law in Sierra Leone.

The twentieth anniversary would also be an opportunity for victims associations as well as high level Sierra Leonean government and United Nations officials, and members of the diplomatic community, academia and civil society, to mark the completion and opening of the memorial garden located in the former SCSL premises in New England. It would provide a chance to reflect on and take stock of the accomplishments and legacy of the SCSL as well as to honor the memory of the many victims of the notoriously brutal Sierra Leonean conflict which lasted between March 1991 and January 2002.

The Residual Special Court for Sierra Leone is responsible for the ongoing legal obligations of the Special Court for Sierra Leone, which concluded its mandate in December 2013. These include supervision of prison sentences, witness protection and support, maintenance and preservation of the archives, and assistance to national prosecution authorities. Website: [rscsl.org](https://www.rscsl.org).

The Center for International Law and Policy in Africa (CILPA) is an independent and non-profit think tank, based in Freetown, Sierra Leone, that aims to shape discourse and build bridges between research, policy and practice on issues of international law and regional law in Africa. Website: [cilpa.org](https://www.cilpa.org)