



Special Court for Sierra Leone

Defence Office

PRESS RELEASE

Freetown, Sierra Leone, 31 March 2006

Defence Office Moves to Ensure Fair Trial Rights for Mr. Charles Taylor

On Wednesday, 29 March 2006, the Registrar of the Special Court for Sierra Leone informed the Principal Defender about the arrival of Mr. Charles Taylor, a detainee, at the Detention Facility of the Court.



Under Article 17 of the Statute of the Court and international criminal law, Mr. Taylor is entitled to a fair trial and is presumed innocent until proved guilty in a competent judicial tribunal. Though he now stands indicted for war crimes, crimes against humanity, and other serious violations of international humanitarian law, these charges do not constitute evidence of his guilt beyond all reasonable doubt.

Photo: Principal Defender Vincent O. Nmehielle

The Principal Defender is mandated to ensure, and will work towards ensuring, that his rights are fully respected in accordance with the requirements of the various instruments of the Court and under international human rights law.

Lawyers from the Defence Office met with Mr. Taylor on the morning of Thursday, 30 March 2006. Mr. Taylor is in fairly good health and is in good spirits. He cooperated with the lawyers who explained his rights under Article 17 of the Statute and addressed personal matters as well as detention-related issues.

Mr. Taylor is considering possibilities in respect of his legal representation. It is his right to be tried in his presence, and to defend himself in person or through legal assistance of his own choosing. He also has the right to be assigned counsel if he is found to not have sufficient means to pay for it.

#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. Ten indictees are currently in the custody of the Court.

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Produced by the
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