



**Government of Sierra Leone  
Ministry of Planning and Economic Development**

Virtual Briefing by the **Minister of Planning and Economic Development of Sierra Leone Honourable Kenyeh Barlay**



At the Ambassadorial-level Meeting on South-South and Triangular Cooperation for Building and Sustaining Peace in New York.

**Minister's Briefing to Focus on: Sierra Leone's experience of south-south and triangular cooperation and peacebuilding; the g7+, Fragile-to-Fragile Cooperation, the Dili Resolution, and the Freetown Declaration**

**29<sup>th</sup> July 2025**

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**Honourable Chair, Excellencies, Distinguished Delegates,**

**Opening**

1. I am particularly pleased to address this meeting today because I represent a number of constituencies pertinent to this discussion. I am not only the Minister of Planning and Economic Development, I am the Focal Point for (Africa Peer Review Mechanism (APRM)-as well as the Chair of the g7+ group of countries and there is a distinctive convergence between all of these responsibilities.
2. Sierra Leone is a country that has emerged from conflict, yet has turned its past struggles into a foundation for resilient peace and inclusive development. The Sierra Leone journey confirms the fact that peace is not a moment, but a process; a continuum-one that must be continually nurtured through national ownership ,innovation, and solidarity.

**The South-South Triangular Cooperation Concept**

3. South-South Triangular Cooperation , as we are all aware, provides a platform through which countries in the Global South can learn from each other, share resources, and jointly address common challenges in ways that are more attuned to our realities .In addition to South-South Cooperation, we must recognize the value of triangular cooperation, which brings together countries of the global south and developed countries or international organizations in a collaborative partnership. Triangular cooperation provides a platform for leveraging the expertise, technical knowledge, and resources of developed nations while ensuring that the solutions are designed to meet the needs of countries in the Global South. We therefore welcome SSTC as an opportunity to strengthen the frameworks that support sustainable peace, especially among countries that share common histories of fragility and recovery.

#### **The Freetown SSTRC Forum and Declaration**

4. It is within this context that Sierra Leone hosted- the Third High-Level Forum on South-South and Triangular Cooperation which took place in Freetown Sierra Leone from 7-9 May ,2025 under the auspices of H.E , President Dr. Julius Maada Bio. Participants to the Forum ,comprised 700 representatives of international and national organisations, authorities, thinktanks and youth associations. It provided an excellent opportunity for more than 100 youth representatives to engage in dialogue with Member States on the role of youth, thinktanks and civil society in promoting SSTRC and social cohesion across the continent.
5. The Freetown Declaration of the Third High-Level Forum made a call for action through the Freetown Declaration which was endorsed at the closing ceremony of the Forum. The declaration mainly emphasised the following:

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  - i. Partnerships for Strengthening Human Capacity: Building a Skilled Workforce.- Enhancing Education and Skills Development-South-South partnerships that can foster collaboration in education and training; including the development of market-relevant skills to address gaps in key sectors such as agriculture, healthcare, information technology, and engineering.
  - ii. Expanding Access to Healthcare Training and Expertise-Leveraging on that are known for their effective health care models.
  - iii. Partnerships that Foster Leadership, Good Governance and Capacity Building- Countries can learn from countries that have successful governance models. Capacity building for public administrators and civil servants to foster transparency, accountability, and efficient public management through exchange programmes and training within the Global South.
  - iv. Improving Transparency and Accountability-Learning from successful initiatives in public finance management, transparency, and anti-corruption efforts in other South-South nations.

- v. Unlocking Financial Resources - South-South cooperation to facilitate investment flows, particularly in key sectors like energy, agriculture, and infrastructure. Partnerships with international financial institutions in the Global South.PPPs through South-South dialogue to fund infrastructure and development projects, particularly in energy, telecommunications, and transportation.
- vi. Technology Transfer and Innovation—South-South partnerships that enable technology transfer that is affordable and adaptable to countries’ needs. This can include technologies for clean energy, water management, agriculture, and healthcare.
- vii. Digital Transformation and Connectivity—South-South partnerships that can help Sierra Leone leapfrog into the digital age, using technologies like e-health, e-learning, and mobile banking.
- viii. Promoting Renewable Energy Solutions—Partnerships that can help countries adopt and scale renewable energy technologies such as solar, wind, and hydropower.

### The g7+ and Dili Declaration

6. The g7+ the inter-governmental group of 20 conflict affected countries that Sierra Leone chairs, has adopted south-south engagement as one of its core pillars of cooperation. Known as the "Fragile-to-Fragile (or F2F) cooperation, this form of SSTC refers to the support that conflict affected countries provide to each other including through peer learning, capacity building, mobilization of international support including financial assistance and knowledge generation. The first of such cooperation took place through cooperation between Guinea-Bissau and Timor-Leste during the former’s election in 2014.
7. Priorities under this initiative have so far been focused on peace, national reconciliation; elections; improving access to justice, public finance management; natural resources; management of UN transitions and humanitarian emergencies, and during crisis such as Ebola.
8. However, meagre it may be, g7+ fragile -to-fragile cooperation has unique features which distinguishes it from traditional cooperation modalities and makes it fit for purpose. These include:
  - i. Fragile to Fragile cooperation is built on home grown solutions and based on solidarity and takes place irrespective of geographical or political consideration that otherwise determine cooperation among countries.
  - ii. The central aim of such cooperation is the pursuit of peace and stability and supporting each other through national dialogue and reconciliation. This has therefore contributed to widening the sphere of south-south cooperation. Countries in the global south such as those in g7+ countries have first-hand experience in pursuing peace and stability through national means. Such experiences have the potential to inspire peace and stability and development in the war affected countries. More importantly, this can become an impetus to reform the international cooperation agenda.
9. Through F2F Cooperation and other forms of south-south cooperation, we have learnt that:

- Experience sharing is crucial to solving common challenges
  - South-South and Triangular Cooperation can be leveraged as a means for genuine solidarity, wherein the global south can successfully mobilise resources to help those in urgent need;
  - South-South and Triangular Cooperation can prove vital in filling skills gaps in critical areas in countries in the global south e.g the ECOWAS Volunteers programme which provides support to critical areas of need including teachers, doctors, consultants and experts in various fields to support member states in achieving the SDGs. ECOWAS also provides mediation to sustain and promote peace in Member States.
10. As Chair of the g7, Sierra Leone has proudly championed the voices and priorities of fragile and conflict-affected states. Under our leadership, the g7+ has institutionalized election observation missions as a tool for peer learning and democratic accountability, demonstrating that fragile countries can support one another in navigating complex transitions.
11. The importance of South and Triangular Cooperation was emphasised in the Dili Declaration which among many committed to solidarity with countries in crisis and Commitment to peace, advancing peer learning and cooperation through the F2F cooperation.
12. In the declaration Key Commitments were made in the following areas:
- Solidarity with Countries in Crisis and Commitment to Peace
  - Advancing Peer Learning and Cooperation
  - Mobilizing Global Support and Securing Debt Relief for Conflict-Affected States
  - Strengthening the g7+ Through Institutional Consolidation
  - We commit to the full ratification of the g7+ Charter by all member states, ensuring the group's legal and institutional consolidation.
  - Strengthening g7+ Leadership on the Global Stage
  - Establish the position of 2 Deputy Chairs

## Conclusion

Fragile-to-Fragile exchanges, under the framework of the g7+, have enabled us to provide technical assistance and share lessons with countries confronting similar challenges—from elections and justice reform to public sector delivery. Our firm belief is that sustainable peace begins with trust: trust in institutions, in leadership, and in each other. We also believe that South-South Triangular Cooperation solidarity is a powerful engine for innovation, resilience, and sustainable development. Thus the Dili and Freetown Declarations should guide our efforts and resolve for productive south-south and global partnership for a better world that leaves no one behind.

Thank you

## **The Freetown Declaration – Advancing a Pan-African Vision for SSTC DILI-FRETOWN - **THERE IS A COVERGENCE**-btwn sstr-g7+**

In May 2025, Sierra Leone had the honour of hosting the **Third Africa High-Level Forum on South-South and Triangular Cooperation**, culminating in the adoption of the **Freetown Declaration**. This landmark declaration reflects a shared continental vision to deepen SSTC as a vehicle for structural transformation and peaceful development. Among its core commitments are the institutionalisation of SSTRc in national governance frameworks, greater engagement of youth, stronger linkages between civil services, and enhanced financing through regional and global Southern partners.

The Freetown Declaration also calls for leveraging Africa’s demographic dividend—especially its youth—as agents of peace, innovation, and reform. For Sierra Leone, it was a moment of both reflection and leadership—showcasing how a fragile state can become a contributor to global governance and regional resilience.

### **Conclusion – A Call to Action and Global Partnership**

**Excellencies, Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen;** We believe that South-South and Triangular Cooperation, when anchored in mutual respect and driven by local leadership, is not only a tool for development—it is a foundation for lasting peace. Our journey from fragility to recovery has taught us that peace is built not only in conference halls, but in communities—through jobs, education, inclusive governance, and trust. We call on partners gathered here today to institutionalise SSTC and F2F cooperation as central instruments for sustaining peace. Together, let us build a more equitable and peaceful global order—one where fragile states are not only recipients, but agents of transformation.

**Thank You.**