



Special Court for Sierra Leone
Outreach and Public Affairs Office

PRESS STATEMENT

Freetown, Sierra Leone, 5 September 2008

Statement by Registrar Herman von Hebel regarding the request by the Liberian Truth and Reconciliation Commission for an audience with Charles Taylor

On 1 September 2008, the Special Court for Sierra Leone received a request from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Liberia for an audience with former President of Liberia Charles Taylor, an accused person indicted by the Special Court in the proceeding The Prosecutor v. Charles Taylor, SCSL-03-01-T, presently before Trial Chamber II.

Former President Charles Taylor faces an 11-count indictment for crimes against humanity, violations of Article 3 common to the Geneva Conventions and of Additional Protocol II, and other serious violations of international humanitarian law.

The Special Court for Sierra Leone informed the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Liberia on 2 September 2008 that any request for an audience with former President Charles Taylor would have to comply with the "Practice Direction on the procedure following a request by a State, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, or other legitimate authority to take a statement from a person in the custody of the Special Court for Sierra Leone," adopted by the Special Court on 9 September 2003 and amended on 4 October 2003.

The Practice Direction sets forth the procedure to be followed upon receipt of such requests. The procedure aims to strike a balance between assisting institutions such as the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Liberia to achieve their mandates, as well as to ensure the rights of accused persons indicted by the Special Court and the integrity of the proceedings before the Special Court.

Should the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Liberia resubmit its request in writing in compliance with the requirements of the Practice Direction, the Registrar will notify the President, the Presiding Judge, the Prosecutor and the Principal Defender of the Special Court. Significantly, in accordance with the Practice Direction, the Registrar will ensure that Mr. Taylor has ample opportunity to take legal advice from his counsel before deciding whether or not to agree to the questioning. If Mr. Taylor agrees, then the Presiding Judge in the Trial Chamber II proceedings, upon hearing the parties, will take a final decision on the request. If the decision is a denial of the request, then an appeal is permitted to the President of the Special Court in the event that both Mr. Taylor and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Liberia agree to submit an appeal. Mr. Taylor maintains the right to deny the request himself.

Monday's request by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission marks the beginning of this process. The Special Court must keep in mind that our greatest concern is the need for Mr. Taylor's right to a fair trial

to be protected. This is a question that, in the end, needs to be answered by the Presiding Judge of the Trial Chamber and, if applicable, the President of the Court.