

SPECIAL COURT FOR SIERRA LEONE  
OFFICE OF THE PROSECUTOR

## **PRESS RELEASE**

Freetown, 17 June 2005

### **Prosecutor Welcomes New Global Witness Report Charles Taylor Interference in Liberian Affairs Remains a Threat to Peace**

The Special Court for Sierra Leone's Prosecutor, David M Crane, welcomed the release this week of a report by the organisation Global Witness: *'Timber, Taylor, Soldier, Spy'* detailing uncontrolled exploitation of Liberia's natural resources, structural violence and interference by former Liberian president Charles Taylor are undermining peace in West Africa.

The Prosecutor reiterated the report's recommendation calling on US, UK, Nigeria and ECOWAS states to facilitate the transfer of Taylor to the Special Court for Sierra Leone to face justice for horrific atrocities he is accused of committing against the people of Sierra Leone.

"Once again a report points to Taylor's threat to the fragile peace that currently exists in Liberia and West Africa. Only his transfer to the detention facility of the Special Court can end his disruptive influence in the region," said Mr Crane.

The Prosecutor added, "Despite a UN travel ban and asset freeze, the report from Global Witness makes clear that Taylor remains in regular contact with former members of his regime and continues to fund destabilising activities in Liberia. He is undermining the entire effort at stabilising Liberia and creating a sustainable peace throughout West Africa."

The Global Witness report maintains that Charles Taylor remains a significant threat to regional security, violating the terms of his asylum agreement with Nigeria by retaining regular contact with key Liberian political and military figures, and interfering in Liberian and regional affairs. It also describes enduring links between the exploitation of natural resources and conflict. It states that UN timber and diamond sanctions are being violated in Liberia and illegal diamond exports are understood to be shipped to Guinea, Sierra Leone, Cote d'Ivoire and even directly to Belgium.

Charles Taylor faces a 17-count indictment for war crimes and crimes against humanity committed during the conflict in Sierra Leone. The charges include terrorising the civilian population, unlawful killings, sexual violence, physical violence, forced conscription of child soldiers, abductions, forced labour, looting and burning, and attacks on UN peacekeeping personnel.

The Prosecutor indicted Charles Taylor on 3 March 2003, and unsealed the indictment on 4 June 2003. Official copies of the indictment and warrant of arrest were delivered to the Nigerian government by the Court's Registry on 27 November 2003, and the International Police Organisation (INTERPOL) issued a "Red Notice" for Charles Taylor on 3

December 2003. Just over one year ago, on 31 May 2004, the Appeals Chamber of the Special Court for Sierra Leone rejected a motion filed by attorneys for Taylor, who sought to have the charges against him thrown out on the grounds that Taylor was a sitting head of state at the time of the indictment.

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 thirteen persons on various charges of war crimes, crimes against humanity, and other serious violations of international humanitarian law. Two indictments were withdrawn following the deaths of the accused. Nine indictees are currently in the custody of the Court.

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