

SPECIAL COURT FOR SIERRA LEONE
OFFICE OF THE PROSECUTOR

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Prosecutor Welcomes Resolution on Charles Taylor in U.S. Senate

Prosecutor David M. Crane has welcomed passage in the U.S. Senate last night of a unanimous consent to a resolution calling for the immediate transfer of Charles Taylor to face justice at the Special Court for Sierra Leone.

Last night's Senate action follows last Wednesday's passage of the same resolution in the U.S. House of Representatives, which passed 421-1. It also comes on the heels of Thursday's agreement between Nigerian President Olusegun Obasanjo and U.S. President George W. Bush to explore ways of finding a solution to the Taylor issue.

"The people of Sierra Leone and West Africa long to see Charles Taylor put on trial. In February the European Parliament voted 98-0 to endorse their demand. Now the United States is speaking with one voice, insisting that Charles Taylor be held to account." said Mr Crane.

The Office of the Prosecutor of the Special Court for Sierra Leone has joined governments, international organisations, and independent analysts in concluding that Charles Taylor remains involved in Liberian politics ahead of elections in the neighbouring country slated for October 11 of this year. His ongoing involvement in Liberia is in direct violation of the terms of his exile arrangement.

"The international community is in the process of making a pivotal decision about the future of West Africa," Mr Crane said. "It will either deliver Taylor for a fair trial and decisively step away from the era of warlordism, or it will give him a pass for the vast suffering he has inflicted, and give new momentum to the cycle of violence and impunity. I am increasingly optimistic that world leaders are making the right choice and will set a new course for this troubled region—one guided by hope instead of fear. I don't believe that the international community will allow a wanted war criminal to undermine peacekeeping and reconstruction efforts in Liberia and Sierra Leone that have cost billions of dollars and many lives, notably those of brave Nigerian soldiers."

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. 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 eleven persons on various charges of war crimes, crimes against humanity, and other serious violations of international humanitarian law. Nine indictees are currently in the custody of the Court.

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