

SPECIAL COURT FOR SIERRA LEONE
PRESS AND PUBLIC AFFAIRS OFFICE

PRESS RELEASE

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Registry Staff Occupy Offices on Permanent Site



Early this month, the Special Court for Sierra Leone began to move to its new permanent site in New England near the centre of Freetown. Construction is still underway. Only the Registry, the administrative branch of the Court, has so far relocated there.

“We are going to be operating in a construction site for the next six months,” said the Registrar, Robin Vincent. “But

we are on our way to becoming an international criminal court on schedule to complete our mandate.”

The Special Court is to try those who bear greatest responsibility for atrocities committed during the country’s armed conflict. It was created through an agreement between the United Nations and the Government of Sierra Leone and has three years to complete its work.

Starting in July 2002, the Registrar and the Prosecutor arrived in Freetown to take up their posts. Each of them quickly established temporary offices in separate premises in the city. The Bank of Sierra Leone lent the Court a three-room building for the Registry; the Prosecutor set up his team elsewhere in the city.

The Government of Sierra Leone provided a permanent 11.5 acre site for the Court. The land was rocky with thick undergrowth and had a number of condemned and abandoned buildings on it, included a former prison training school.

In August 2002, the Registry contracted a Sierra Leone company, Sierra Construction Systems, to begin clearing the site. The company also erected a

perimeter fence, renovated two of the former cell blocks of the prison school, which will be used as a detention centre for the Court, and laid foundations for the complex of offices.

188 prefabricated container-sized structures were shipped from Slovenia and arrived on the docks of Freetown in December 2002. A team of technicians also came from Slovenia and over the New Year holidays worked with Sierra Construction Systems to assemble the structures into fifteen office blocks.

Some staff in the Registry worked over the holiday period to move documents and equipment out of the Bank Complex and into six of the newly assembled office blocks. The rest of the Registry staff moved in when they returned from leave.

“The Registry can now begin to expand,” said Vincent, “We are extremely grateful to the Bank of Sierra Leone for having let us use their building and for the Government of Sierra Leone’s assistance in making the arrangements. But we had started to run out of space there for the new employees that were coming on board.”

The overall number of employees of the Court is set to increase from seventy to over two hundred in the coming months. New recruits have already been employed in the Registry with skills in areas such as information technology, security, and witness and victim support. Staff numbers will also increase for other branches of the Court, in particular for the Judges and Defence.

The Prosecutor had already recruited most of his staff by the end of November 2002. They will continue working at their temporary premises until their offices on the permanent site are complete.

The final phase of construction will be the Court House. The Registry is currently tendering bids for the design. The building is to be complete mid-2003. It will be the centre piece of the Special Court complex and a landmark for the city of Freetown.

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