

SPECIAL COURT FOR SIERRA LEONE
Office of the Prosecutor

PRESS RELEASE

Freetown, 25 March, 2006

Statement by Special Court Prosecutor Desmond de Silva, QC **Welcoming the Nigerian Announcement on the Transfer of Charles** **Taylor**

I would like to congratulate President Johnson-Sirleaf for having made her request for the surrender of the fugitive Charles Taylor. I am also indebted to President Obasanjo for agreeing to transfer Charles Taylor in order that he can be brought to trial before this international criminal tribunal for the many terrible crimes against the people of Sierra Leone for which he has been indicted.

My thanks go out to African leaders consulted by the Presidents of Liberia and Nigeria and of course also to the United States and the United Kingdom who have been so steadfast in seeking to ensure that the rule of law is upheld and that an end is brought to impunity.

This is a most significant day for those who support the cause of international justice around the world, and for the victims of so many conflicts who have suffered so grievously.

Produced by the
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Visit the Special Court's website at www.sc-sl.org

Brief Chronology on Efforts to Bring Charles Taylor to Justice

On 3 March 2003 the Special Court Prosecutor signed a 17-count indictment alleging war crimes, crimes against humanity, and other serious violations of international humanitarian law. The indictment was confirmed by the Trial Chamber on 7 March 2003 but ordered kept under seal.

The Prosecutor unsealed the indictment on 4 June 2003, during Taylor's first trip out of Liberia since the signing of the indictment.

On 4 August 2003 Taylor went into exile in Calabar, Nigeria.

On 31 October and 1 November 2003 Taylor's lawyer, the late Terrence Terry, introduced a preliminary motion before the Special Court's Appeals Chamber unsuccessfully challenging the Court's jurisdiction to try him. The motion argued that as President of Liberia, Taylor enjoyed head of state immunity. He also argued that the Court was not an international tribunal and thus had no jurisdiction outside of Sierra Leone.

On 31 May 2004 the Appeals Chamber decided the Special Court was an international court and that a head of state does not enjoy immunity from prosecution before an international court. The motion was consequently dismissed.

On 24 February 2005 the European Parliament unanimously passed a resolution calling for Nigeria to transfer Charles Taylor to the Special Court for Sierra Leone.

On 4 May 2005 the U.S. House of Representatives passed a Resolution, 421-1, calling for Nigeria to transfer Charles Taylor to the Special Court for Sierra Leone.

On 11 May 2005 the U.S. Senate passed the 4 May House Resolution by unanimous consent, joining the call for Nigeria to transfer Charles Taylor to the Special Court for Sierra Leone.

On 24 May 2005 members of the United Nations Security Council underlined the importance of ensuring that all those who have been indicted by the Court appear before it, thereby strengthening the stability of Sierra Leone and the sub-region and bringing an end to impunity.

On 30 June 2005 a coalition of up to 300 African and international civil society groups sent a declaration to the African Union (AU) demanding that Nigeria surrender Charles Taylor to the Special Court for Sierra Leone. Press conferences were held in 14 countries throughout Africa announcing the declaration.

On 11 November 2005 the UN Security Council passed resolution 1638 which gave the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) the powers to detain Charles Taylor should he ever be returned to Liberia, and apprehend and transfer him to the Special Court. This resolution clearly displays the views of the UN Security Council's that Taylor should be brought to justice at the Special Court.