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Child Rights Coalition - Sierra Leone (CRC-SL)

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United Nations Human Rights Council

18th Session

12- 30 September 2011

Consideration of the UPR report of Sierra Leone

Madame President,

Save the Children is making this statement on behalf of the Child Rights Coalition – Sierra Leone that also includes War Child, Defence for Children International, World Vision, AMNet and Christian Brothers. We welcome the Report of the Working Group on the UPR of Sierra Leone, in particular the recommendations relating to children's rights. The Child Rights Coalition – Sierra Leone, with the participation of children and young people, developed a child focused UPR report for Sierra Leone that was submitted to the Office of the High Commissioner on Human Rights. The Child Rights Coalition commends the Government of Sierra Leone for immediately accepting 101 recommendations made by the working Group. Furthermore, the Child Rights Coalition commends the open attitude of the Government for collaboration with the Human Rights Commission and civil society towards the implementation of the recommendations.

We call on the Sierra Leonean Government to address the following issues:

1. Inadequate implementation of the 2007 Child Rights Act

Recommendation 81.36 calls on the Government to put in place effective measures to implement the 2007 Child Rights Act. The Child Rights Coalition - Sierra Leone commends the Government for accepting this recommendation, but regrets that key Child Protection structures (such as the National Commission for Children, Child Welfare Committees, Child Panels, Family Courts, Child Welfare Departments at Councils) are yet to be established. The Child Rights Coalition – Sierra Leone also regrets the submission of an amendment to the Child Rights Act making the National Commission for Children dependent on the Ministry of Social Welfare, Gender and Children's Affairs.

We strongly urge the Government to pass legislation before Parliament to establish an independent and resourced National Commission for Children in line with its commitments in the CRA and UN CRC.

2. Female Genital Mutilation (FGM)

Recommendations 80.18, 80.19 and 80.20 call for the Government to abolish FGM and to take all necessary measures to prevent women and girls from suffering from harmful traditional practices. The Child Rights Coalition - Sierra Leone commends the Government for passing the legislation before parliament on banning FGM for children below 18 years, but the Coalition remains concerned that the issue of FGM still prevails particularly in rural communities. Children as young as five are still initiated and circumcised, partly because the public is yet to be widely sensitized on this new legislation. The CRC-SL therefore strongly urges the government of Sierra Leone to quickly sensitize the public about the new legislation on FGM and enforce laws for defaulters.

The Child Rights Coalition – Sierra Leone appreciates and is looking forward to the Government's continued cooperation with civil society organisations in the follow-up to the UPR.

Thank you.

Child Rights Coalition – Sierra Leone is a civil society coalition of 20 organizations working to promote child rights in Sierra Leone. The Coalition, established in 2007 has been monitoring implementation of UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), Optional Protocols to the UN CRC, African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child and other child rights conventions in the country.