

Implementing the Tripartite Recommendations in Sierra Leone: Using the AU-TJP Peace Process Elements.

By MRCG

In July 2024, the Cross Party Committee on Electoral Systems and Management Bodies Review or 'Tripartite Committee' produced its report. Sierra Leone held its multi-tier elections on the 24th of June, 2023. The Electoral Commission of Sierra Leone (ECSL), on the 27th of June, 2023, declared H.E President Julius Maada Bio as the winner of the presidential race, securing 56.1% of the popular vote. According to the report, the period between voting and the announcement of election results was marred by escalating tensions. Statements made by some Partners and Election Observer Missions called into question the integrity and credibility of results before ECSL announced them. The report pointed out that the factors created a post-election environment marred with mistrust, heightening tensions between the ruling party and the opposition. That announcement ended in a controversy, with the APC rejecting the announced results. The report pointed out that the Independent Commission for Peace and National Cohesion (ICPNC) initiated actions to settle the 'political impasse' of APC nonparticipation in governance. The ICPNC succeeded in getting the endorsement of the United Nations, Commonwealth, the African Union, and the ECOWAS, to support a mediated dialogue. On Wednesday, 18th October, 2023, the 'National Unity Agreement' was signed between the Government of Sierra Leone (GoSL) and the All Peoples Congress (APC) party, and it was agreed thus "Constitution of a Cross-party Committee on Electoral Systems and Management Bodies Review with a three-way Leadership.' In July 2024, the Committee produced a report containing findings and recommendations for Electoral Management, Institutional Reform and Legal Reforms.

Despite significant disputes, the Committee's recommendation might revolutionise Sierra Leone's electoral system. By working together to implement the suggestions, there is a chance to improve democratic peace processes in Sierra Leone. The Committee's recommendations are an essential turning point that could influence the country's stability in the future while also fostering democracy and accountability.

The mechanism for pursuing the TJP's peacebuilding element—which includes peace negotiations and agreements—should be at the core of implementing the recommendations. This mechanism should consider consolidating peace and incorporate TJ considerations from the beginning of the negotiation or mediation processes. To guarantee that they have a favorable impact on resolving all issues about

the parties and the general public, TJ considerations ought to be included in the peace process's agenda.

The AU-TJP notes that to negotiate peace and justice; steps should be taken to investigate and reveal serious violations that have been committed, as well as to identify transitional justice goals in peace processes and the measures necessary to end violent conflicts, establish strong guarantees to prevent new violence against civilians, particularly women and children, ensure ceasefire and cessation of hostilities, and prevent the resumption of hostilities. Specifically, the peace process element of the TJP is concerned with bringing an end to any ongoing violence and removing the threats of further violence impacting the affected population. It covers the provision of protection and security guarantees to civilians in the conflict- or violence-affected areas, including those specific to the security needs of women and children as well as other vulnerable and marginalized groups. The document further notes that the mechanism for pursuing the peacebuilding element of the TJP includes peace negotiations and agreement should incorporate TJ considerations from the outset of negotiation or mediation processes. TJ considerations should form part of the agenda in peace processes to ensure that they positively influence the resolution of all dimensions of the conflict.

A zero-tolerance policy against acts of violence towards civilians during peace negotiations, which includes the monitoring, reporting, and public condemnation of the parties involved in such acts; the re-establishment of law and order through the urgent reconfiguration and reinvigoration of local administration and institutions responsible for the administration of justice; the implementation of measures that end ongoing violence and prevent new violations, such as the cessation of hostilities and a permanent ceasefire; the protection of civilians, with particular emphasis on women and children; the disarmament of militias; the removal of small arms and weapons from public circulation; ensuring the availability of tools and opportunities to enhance civilian participation in peace processes, particularly for conflict-affected groups like women, youth, and children; and the inclusion of clauses related to justice, human rights, reconciliation, accountability, trust-building, social cohesion, and the end of impunity in comprehensive peace agreements.

Establishing the Tripartite Committee and its recommendations represent a critical turning point in Sierra Leone's democratic development. The Committee's cooperative efforts, aided by international partners, have produced thorough proposals to improve electoral accountability, openness, and inclusivity despite early setbacks and political difficulties. President Bio's pledge to carry out these suggestions demonstrates a shared

determination to fortify Sierra Leone's electoral framework and promote national cohesion. All political stakeholders must continue to communicate and work together to move forward and ensure that the democratic process develops further for the good of all Sierra Leoneans. This should be done taking into consideration the peace elements in the AU-TJP. The MRCG, therefore, calls on the government of Sierra Leone to implement the tripartite committee recommendations using the AU-TJP peace process elements.