

**Statement by**  
**Thomas N. Hull, III**  
**Ambassador-Designate to the Republic of Sierra Leone**  
**Before the**  
**Committee on Foreign Relations**  
**April 28, 2004**

Mr. Chairman, I appreciate the privilege of appearing before the Africa Sub-Committee of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee for your consideration of my nomination by President Bush to be Ambassador to the Republic of Sierra Leone. I am greatly honored by this nomination, and, if confirmed by the United States Senate, I shall uphold the trust reposed in me.

Mr. Chairman, in the aftermath of Sierra Leone's brutal civil war considerable progress has been made towards consolidating peace with the help of the international community -- including significant American assistance. The United Nations peacekeeping force, UNAMSIL, is expected to complete its mission in 2005, and the Special Court for Sierra Leone plans to proceed with the prosecution of war criminals. The peace is fragile,

however, and, if confirmed, will require my constant attention as Ambassador.

Democracy is taking root in Sierra Leone, with local elections to be held next month. The United States will provide training to district and town councils as newly elected officials take up their responsibilities. The greatest threat to democracy in Sierra Leone is corruption. If confirmed, I will not only nurture democracy, but will firmly urge leaders to actively support Sierra Leone's Anti-Corruption Commission.

Sierra Leone is the world's least developed country, according to 2003 UN statistics. To boost the economy and provide for basic human needs, if confirmed I will focus USAID assistance on agricultural development to increase employment and produce food and cash crops. I will also direct U.S. assistance to support the Government's efforts to exploit its diamond resources in a more transparent fashion, according to the Kimberly process, and in a manner that will generate revenues in diamond producing areas to stimulate local economic growth. I also intend to foster private sector development through micro-enterprise programs and trade incentives, such as AGOA, and to advocate for U.S. business interests.

HIV/AIDS poses a tragic threat to Sierra Leone's future. The United States has financed an innovative AIDS awareness program in the Sierra Leone Armed Forces, and our assistance to combat AIDS should continue. Centers for Disease Control specialists regularly advise the Sierra Leone Government on combating AIDS. If confirmed, I will give these activities high priority.

Mr. Chairman, if confirmed, the safety of American citizens, including those serving at the American Embassy, will be my paramount concern. Ground will be broken next month for a new chancery, and I will expeditiously complete the embassy's relocation from its present vulnerable building in downtown Freetown to the new, more secure site.

Mr. Chairman, I first went to Sierra Leone as a Peace Corps Volunteer nearly thirty-six years ago, and since then I have had seven Foreign Service assignments in Africa and was Director of African Affairs at the former United States Information Agency. If confirmed, I would bring a thorough understanding of Africa and concern for Africans to my position as Ambassador. I would also bring the knowledge and experience to be an

effective steward of American foreign policy interests, our people, and our resources in Freetown.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman for the opportunity to appear before your Committee. I would be pleased to respond to your questions.