Special Court for Sierra Leone
Outreach and Public Affairs Office

PRESS RELEASE

Freetown, Sierra Leone, 1 March 2012

Trial Chamber to Deliver Taylor Judgment on 26 April 2012

Judgment in the trial of former Liberian President Charles Taylor will take place on 26 April 2012, in accordance with a Scheduling Order issued today by Trial Chamber II.

The Judgment will be delivered at 11:00 a.m. in a courtroom belonging to the Special Tribunal for Lebanon in The Hague, where the Taylor trial has been taking place.

Charles Taylor was charged in an 11-count indictment alleging responsibility for war crimes, crimes against humanity, and other serious violations of international humanitarian law committed by rebel forces in Sierra Leone during the country's decade-long civil war. He has pleaded not guilty to all charges.

The Taylor trial opened on 4 June 2007 in The Hague. It was adjourned immediately after the Prosecution's opening statement when Mr. Taylor dismissed his Defence team and requested new representation. Witness testimony commenced on 7 January 2008, and ended on 12 November 2010. Closing arguments took place in February and March 2011.

The Court heard live testimony from 94 Prosecution witnesses, and received written statements from four additional witnesses. The Defence presented 21 witnesses, with Mr. Taylor testifying in his defence.

At a meeting this week with members of Sierra Leonean civil society, Special Court Registrar Binta Mansaray said that although delivery of the judgment had taken nearly a year, this was due largely to the complexity of the case. She noted that, amongst other matters, the Judges had to read through more than 50,000 pages of witness testimony, and to examine the1,520 exhibits which had been tendered in evidence. She said the time-frame was consistent with similar high-profile cases at other international tribunals.

Ms. Mansaray said that with this judgment the Special Court is set to reach another critical milestone, given that this is the last trial stemming from Sierra Leone's decade-long civil war, and that it will be the last major trial to be held at the Court.

At the Special Court, as in other international tribunals, both the Prosecution and the Defence have the right to appeal. If Mr. Taylor is acquitted on all charges, the appeals process will begin immediately. If he is found guilty on any of the 11 counts, the Trial Chamber will schedule sentencing proceedings.

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