

FREETOWN, Sierra Leone, September 18 (Infosplusgabon) - Sierra Leone's President Ernest Bai Koroma will miss the 72nd United Nations General Assembly meeting in New York because he is supervising the response to last month's landslide and floods disaster in the capital, Freetown, which claimed the lives of at least 500 people and wreaked havoc in the city.

Presidential spokesman, Abdulai Bayraytay, said in a radio interview on Monday that Foreign Minister Samura Kamara would represent Sierra Leone in the annual UN gathering.

This would have been President Koroma's last UN General Assembly meeting as he bows out after presidential election in March next year after concluding his second term.

Bayraytay said: "The President cannot leave the country because of the disaster response he is personally overseeing."

On 14 August, Freetown was hit by severe flash floods and mudslide killing hundreds of people and displacing many thousands more. In the aftermath of the disaster, the government coded the situation as a high threat to state security. Military personnel have since been enlisted to coordinate response efforts.

During the Ebola outbreak in 2014/15 that also killed hundreds of people, President Koroma was absent from the UN General Assembly for two consecutive years.

President Koroma is the head of a bloc of African countries within the UN that is agitating for two permanent UN Security Council seats for Africa.

Bayraytay said the Foreign Minister would hold town hall meetings with the Sierra Leonean Diaspora in New York and across the United States.

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