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**PRESS RELEASE**

Ref No UNAMSIL/PIO/PR/214/2005

Date: 2 February 2005

**SRSR HANDS OVER EQUIPMENT AND FURNITURE TO MARWOPNET**

*Freetown, Sierra Leone* – The Special Representative of the Secretary-General (SRSG) of the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL), Ambassador Daudi Mwakawago, on Monday handed over computers, printers, fax machines, office tables and desks donated by UNAMSIL to the Sierra Leone Chapter of the Mano River Women’s Peace Network (MARWOPNET) at its Freetown headquarters.

The Mano River Women’s Peace Network (MARWOPNET) was formed in April 2000 when a group of thirty women from the Mano River basin met in Abuja, Nigeria for a workshop which was supported by the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the African Union and the United Nations, and initiated by Femmes Afrique Solidarite (FAS) an Africa Women’s non-governmental organization based in Geneva.

In his statement Ambassador Mwakawago said since its inception, MARWOPNET had attained its main objective as an important player of the promotion and development of peace and reconciliation process in the sub-region resulting in its being presented by Secretary-General Kofi Annan with the United Nations prize for Human Rights in 2003. The network had also gained observer status in ECOWAS meetings. The SRSG was also impressed by the relentless efforts of MARWOPNET in preventing and resolving conflicts in general and in the Mano River area and congratulated the Government of Sierra Leone for providing the network with an office building.

Earlier, in her welcoming remarks, the network’s Vice-President, Mrs. Yasmin Fofana, disclosed that in the last three years MARWOPNET had been trying to gather resources to make its secretariat functional. In a statement, Sierra Leone’s Foreign Affairs Minister, Momodu Koroma, said he was “a firm believer in women’s rights”, noting that the gesture of the presentation would no doubt motivate them in furthering their goals, lauded the international community through the SRSG for assisting to the country. Social Welfare, Gender and Children’s Affairs Minister, Shirley Gbujama, in her remarks, stated that the presentation demonstrated that MARWOPNET was held in high esteem by the UN.

Also present at the event was the Mano River Secretary-General, Alhaji Tejan, who said the presentation was very vital to MARWOPNET’s work for peace in the sub-region.

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