



PRESS RELEASE

Ref No UNAMSIL/PIO/PR/222/2004

Date: 3 March 2005

UNITED NATIONS DEPUTY SECRETARY-GENERAL STRESSES UN ZERO TOLERANCE POLICY

Freetown, Sierra Leone – Deputy Secretary-General, Louise Fréchette, arrived in Sierra Leone yesterday afternoon (Wednesday 1 March). She immediately met with the Secretary-General’s Special Representative for Sierra Leone, Daudi N. Mwakawago and with a cross-section of personnel working on sexual exploitation and abuse issues. These included UNAMSIL (United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone) focal points, and representatives of UN agencies and international NGOs based in the country.

The Deputy Secretary-General stressed that the Secretary-General’s zero tolerance policy must be respected by everyone. “It is an obligation on the part of every United Nations employee to observe the code of conduct”, she said. “Our code is very specific.”

Earlier today, Ms. Fréchette met with the UN Country Team and UNAMSIL senior members of staff and urged that the newly established in-country network on sexual exploitation and abuse be used as a prevention and enforcement mechanism. She noted that strong leadership was the key to eliminating sexual exploitation and abuse.

Acknowledging the dangerous and complex environments in which peacekeeping operations functioned, she stated that because of the vulnerability to exploitation of the local population, there was a need to “accept a degree of restriction on ... personnel behaviour”.

Later, during a meeting with Sierra Leone’s President Ahmad Tejan Kabbah, the Deputy Secretary-General discussed the way forward for the Mission and the future of Sierra Leone, including the need for strengthening of the security forces. Mr. Kabbah noted the progress being made in training and capacity-building of the national security forces. He further apprised the Deputy Secretary-General of the constraints his Government continued to face in its effort to enhance the capacity of the national army.

At a forum attended by UNAMSIL Force Commander, Major-General Sajjad Akram, civilian police (CIVPOL) Commissioner, Hudson Benu, and senior military operations and CIVPOL personnel, Ms. Fréchette emphasized that rules for behaviour, codes, directives and standard operating procedures must be enforced by contingents through national disciplinary law.

Also, Military Adviser in the Department of Peacekeeping Operations, Lieutenant General Randhir Kumar Mehta, noted that there were special disciplinary requirements for military personnel to observe in the discharge of their duties when working in UN peace operations.

This afternoon, Ms. Fréchette will have further meetings with international non-governmental organizations based in Sierra Leone. She will also hold a town hall meeting with UN agencies and UNAMSIL staff members and host a press conference at UNAMSIL headquarters.