



UNITED NATIONS

NATIONS UNIES

*UNITED NATIONS MISSION IN SIERRA LEONE
(UNAMSIL)*

PRESS RELEASE

Ref No UNAMSIL/PIO/PR296 /2005

LIBERIAN PRESIDENT- ELECT VISITS UNAMSIL

Freetown, Sierra Leone, 23 December 2005 ----- The President-elect of the Republic of Liberia, Mrs. Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, who is on a one day consultative visit to Sierra Leone, made a brief stop over at the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL)

Receiving the president-elect, the Special Representative of the Secretary General for Sierra Leone, Ambassador Daudi Mwakawago, congratulated her on her election as the next president of the Republic of Liberia which he said was a very important signal for the West African sub-region particularly because; at last the bullet has given way for the ballot as the decider of who should be the president.

The SRSG, who has been championing girl-child education in Sierra Leone, described Mrs. Sirleaf as a role model who can now be used as a reference point to advocate for girl-child education in the sub-region.

Ambassador Mwakawago while briefing the President-elect on the achievements of UNAMSIL explained that the peacekeeping role of the mission has come to an end, and the follow-up mission was preparing to launch the peace building phase which will consolidate the successes of UNAMSIL.

He announced that UNAMSIL had a very excellent working relationship with its neighbors especially Liberia. He further explained that, it was based on this cordial relationship that when the United Nations Mission in Liberia was established, UNAMSIL provided the troops to kick start the mission, and now that UNAMSIL is closing down the security of the Special Court in Sierra Leone is the prerogative of UNMIL.

The SRSG explained that it was also in the spirit of good neighborliness that he flew to Monrovia early in the day to bid farewell to the government and people of Liberia for their support particularly in maintaining peace on their side without which UNAMSIL would not have succeeded in its assignment.

In her response, the President-elect, Mrs. Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, thanked the United Nations for helping Sierra Leone achieve peace and can now proceed with development which is the

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most important agenda. She noted that one of the first steps in post conflict development is to address the issue of poverty which is the principal root causes of conflict in Africa. She said she was inspired by the fact that Mr. Victor Angelo who successfully led the efforts for post conflict acceleration of development in Mozambique is going to head the new mission.

Outlining the priorities for her administration, Mrs. Sirleaf announced that she plans to reach out to one another in the spirit of reconciliation, and to restructure the country's security forces as well as pursue development which has been neglected over the years.

“The responsibilities and challenges ahead are awesome, but we are happy for the opportunity to start our country on the road to development which Sierra Leone has already traveled.” She said adding that “as we go beyond national development agenda, we will need to promote regional cooperation as one way of creating economy of scale that will move us from exporters of products to industrialization which can help us create the jobs and be able to provide social services that our people need.”

The president-elect also declared that her government will set the stage for sustainability and growth as a means of ensuring lasting peace, as lasting peace can only be built upon the foundation in which people are engaged in productive endeavors, where people look at the future with hope and where people are confident that they can express their potentials professionally and politically. In this regards, she plans to join others in the sub region who have achieved a measure of success to create the appropriate environment.

Mrs. Johnson Sirleaf congratulated UNAMSIL leadership and the people of Sierra Leone for the peace that has returned to the country, and said, “together we can make the sub-region a better place for all our people.”