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(UNAMSIL)**

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**PRESS RELEASE**

**SECURITY COUNCIL DELEGATION TO VISIT SIERRA LEONE**

*Freetown* – A fourteen-member United Nations Security Council delegation will this Friday 25 June visit Sierra Leone as part of a ten-day mission to West Africa. They are expected to assess progress toward long-term security there and determine benchmarks for the reduction of the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL) peacekeeping force in 2005.

In March 2004, by resolution 1537, the Security Council decided that a residual UNAMSIL presence would remain in the country for an initial period of six months from 1 January 2005. It also affirmed its intention to confirm the precise tasks and benchmarks of the Mission by 30 September 2004.

The delegation, which will be headed by Ambassador Emyr Jones Parry (United Kingdom), also expects to make similar visits to a number of other countries in the region, including Côte D'Ivoire and Liberia, where the UN earlier this year established peacekeeping operations. Other members of the delegation are Ambassador Mourad Benmehidi (Algeria); Ambassador Ismael Gaspar Martins (Angola); Ambassador Joel W. Adechi (Benin); Ms. Irene Vida Gala (Brazil); Mr. Hugo Ignacio Llanos (Chile); Mr. Jiang Jiang (China); Ambassador Jean-Marc de la Sabliere (France); Mr. Stefan Delfs (Germany); Mr. Sohail Mahmood (Pakistan); Mr. Patrick Chuasoto (Philippines); Mr. Marius Dragolea (Romania); Ms. Ana Jimenez (Spain); and Ambassador Sichan Siv (United States).

During the delegation's mission, they will meet with President Alhaji Ahmad Tejan Kabbah; Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General in Sierra Leone (SRSG), Ambassador Daudi Ngelautwa Nwakawago; the UN backed Special Court for Sierra Leone; the diplomatic corps and civil society groups. Delegation members will host a press conference at 6 p.m. in the press conference room at UNAMSIL headquarters in Freetown.

On 22 October 1999, the Security Council authorized the establishment of UNAMSIL to assist the Government and the parties involved in the conflict in carrying out provisions of the Lome Peace Agreement, which brought Sierra Leone's civil conflict, that lasted from 1991 until 2002, to an end.

While the situation following the conflict now seems "much improved", concerns remain about the consolidation of peace. In his twenty-first report on UNAMSIL (S/2004/228), Secretary-General Kofi Annan noted that because the Sierra Leone armed forces faced "serious shortfalls", it was impossible for the Government to assume responsibility for external security by the time the mission was set to expire in December this year.

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