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UNAMSIL FORCE COMMANDER ENDS TOUR OF DUTY



*Freetown, Sierra Leone—13th September 2005.--*As part of activities marking the end of his tour of duty with the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL), the Force Commander, Major General Sajjad Akram today paid a farewell visit to the Nigerian Battalion (NIBATT 19) at their Spur Road headquarters, Freetown.

Welcoming the Force Commander, the Commanding Officer for NIBATT 19, Lt. Col. Jibril Ismail, extolled General Akram's

leadership qualities and said he will be badly missed not only by the Nigerian contingents but by the entire UNAMSIL family.

In his Farewell Speech, General Akram congratulated the Officers, men and women of NIBATT 19 for their pivotal role in maintaining peace and security in Sierra Leone adding that their contributions towards peace building and peace sustenance in Sierra Leone are well acknowledged by the international community. He also lauded their sacrifices and sincere efforts for bringing peace and stability which he said form part of the nation's history that will always be remembered with respect and gratitude.

The Force Commander averred that Nigerians have done exceedingly good job and have been a source of inspiration and encouragement for other units and contingents in the mission area. "As Force Commander, I would like to say that, during your stay in UNAMSIL, you displayed the highest standards of professionalism and military discipline. The proficiency with which you all have performed the operational and humanitarian assignments amply reflects your level of professionalism, dedication and commitment" he said.

General Akram stated that his two years as Force Commander of a mission considered to be the most successful peacekeeping mission ever established by the United Nations gives him a sense of satisfaction and accomplishment. "It has been a remarkable and challenging two years; but I have enjoyed every moment of my command and I am going home with a sense of satisfaction and accomplishment".

Major General Sajjad Akram assumed the appointment of Deputy Force Commander/Chief Military Observer UNAMSIL, on 11 August 2003 and was later appointed Force Commander/Chief Military Observer on 1 October 2003. During his tenure of service in the United Nations, he has traveled internationally to share his experiences of a command that is rightly considered a success story in the world of peacekeeping.

Major General Sajjad Akram was born in 1954 in Hyderabad, Pakistan. He was commissioned in 1971 into an elite infantry battalion of the Pakistan Army with a proud history and rich traditions. He is a graduate of the Command and Staff College, Quetta, and the National Defence College of Pakistan and holds varied experience of Command, Staff and Instruction at different levels in the Army.

General Akram leaves the mission area for his home country Pakistan at the end of September, 2005.