



## **PRESS RELEASE**

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### **UNAMSIL AIRCRAFT ON RESCUE OPERATION IN HIGH SEAS**

*Freetown, Sierra Leone* – A Conakry-bound helicopter belonging to the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone (tail number UN 104) Wednesday 13 October sighted some 50 people in the Atlantic Ocean waters, some three nautical miles west of the Lungi Airport tower, just outside Freetown.

The Air Operations unit (AIROPS) of UNAMSIL informed the Sierra Leone Department of Civil Aviation, the Airports Authority and Ports Authority.

UN104 hovered over the location and in 30 minutes, one UNAMSIL Ukrainian Aviation Unit winch-fitted helicopter was launched from its base at Hastings, outside Freetown followed by a second one, five minutes later. Medical staff were also placed on standby at UNAMSIL Mammy Yoko Headquarters in Freetown.

When they arrived on station, the UN aircraft air dropped four life rafts, in which the majority of survivors embarked.

As local fishing boats started arriving on the scene to help with the rescue efforts, the two UN helicopters were directed to conduct a two-nautical mile radius surface search of the area from the location of the largest group of survivors, while these were being picked up by fishing boats.

The UNAMSIL air search-and-rescue operation eventually wound up and the area cleared, with one of the pilots reporting the sight of five dead bodies in the water. The Sierra Leone Police has since confirmed the deaths of nine people (four women and five children).

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