

UNITED NATIONS



NATIONS UNIES

UNITED NATIONS MISSION IN SIERRA LEONE
(UNAMSIL)

Ref. No.: UNAMSIL/PIOR 069/2004

24 January 2004

PRESS RELEASE

SRSR ADDRESSES 6TH DEPAC MEETING

Freetown - The Special Representative of the Secretary-General in Sierra Leone, Ambassador Daudi Ngelautwa Mwakawago Thursday January 22 addressed members of the 6th Development Partnership Committee (DEPAC) comprising the Vice President Solomon Berewa, government ministers and the donor community in Freetown.

Ambassador Mwakawago said the Security Council was concerned about the manner in which the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL) was drawing down so that it would be “a soft and not an abrupt departure” from the country. This, he said,



*VP Berewa (Third from right), DRSG Alan Doss (Left)
SRSR Mwakawago (second left) at DEPAC meeting*

would enable the Government of Sierra Leone take complete control after UNAMSIL would have left. He said a UN delegation would be coming to Sierra Leone next February for a 2-week assessment of the situation in the country and would be reporting back to the Council to

determine the draw down plan of the Mission. The SRSR went on that UNAMSIL would continue to assist the Government and people of Sierra Leone including in the forthcoming local government elections, as enshrined in its mandate, assuring “you can count on us for assistance.”

Earlier, the Deputy SRSR, Mr. Alan Doss introduced the SRSR to the meeting. On DEPAC, Mr. Doss said the every-two-monthly meeting was a way of enabling the government and its donor partners assess progress and challenges for the development of the country. He said decentralization was the highlight for this year’s meeting as

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government planned to hold Local Government, District and Chiefdom Council elections.

Thanking the donor community for their assistance in the recovery process of the country, Vice President Solomon Berewa, who chairs the DEPAC meetings, said that 2004 was an important year for the “continued consolidation of peace, transition from recovery to development and the process of decentralization”. He said that of the 32 benchmarks of the Consultative Group’s framework, 10 crucial ones were achieved last year including the DDR process, the resettlement of internally displaced persons, the publication of the anti-corruption survey, the poverty reduction growth strategy, the operation of Magistrate Courts in all the 12 districts and the surpassing of the diamond export target of US\$60 million by US\$16 million hence putting the official diamond export figure at US\$ 76million in 2003.

The Vice President informed that as recommended by the DEPAC meeting, the Development Assistance Coordination Office (DACO) had been set up and was now functional headed by the Executive Secretary Dr Francis Kaikai of the National Committee for Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration (NCDDR), which is now phasing out.

The meeting itself looked at the development of the health sector, water and sanitation, road infrastructure and the poverty reduction strategy and expressed the hope that future road users “will be much more willing to pay road users charges in the form of toll system as road improvement advances”. The meeting prioritized the improvement of water and sanitation.

In the health sector, the need was stressed for an urgent strengthening of the human resource and the establishment of a Directorate of Human Resources in the Ministry of Health. Particularly emphasis was laid on the “vulnerability” of the country to HIV/AIDS and called for stringer leadership by the National HIV/AIDS Secretariat “in order for the Government, NGOs, Civil Society organizations, and donors to aggressively tackle this challenge”. Ministers, parliamentarians and other senior government officials were also urged to draw the attention of the public to the “growing danger” of the disease.

The 2-day meeting was attended by, among others, representative of UN Agencies, World Bank, European Union, African Development Bank, IFAD and the US, UK, Japanese, German and Swiss Ambassadors to Sierra Leone.

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