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PRESS RELEASE

**UNAMSIL DSRSG COMMISSIONS MAGISTRATE COURTS IN KAILAHUN, PUJEHUN
AND MATTRU JONG**



*From left to right: UNAMSIL DSRSG Alan Doss,
NaCSA Commissioner, Alhaji Kanja Sesay
Sierra Leone Chief Justice Abdullai Timbo,*

Freetown, Sierra Leone – Mr. Alan Doss, UNAMSIL Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary-General (DSRSG) for Governance and Stabilization and UNDP Resident Representative, handed over to the Government of Sierra Leone three newly constructed Magistrate courts in Kailahun, Pujehun and Mattru Jong on Tuesday 11 May 2004.

Commissioning the Magistrate courts, Mr. Doss emphasized the importance of the rule of law for the consolidation of peace, underlining the timeliness of these projects as UNAMSIL gradually transfers primacy

for security responsibility to the Government of Sierra Leone. The DSRSG further stressed that, more than the court buildings, the quality of the court proceedings would make the difference. “Justice needs to be done, and be seen to be done, in a fair and timely manner”, he said. He called for sustained, measurable improvement of the judiciary, notably in terms of reduction in pre-trial detention time and in the number of adjournments. The DSRSG further disclosed that UNDP would increase its support to the various levels of the judicial system in Sierra Leone. He cautioned however that what the United Nations and other partners contributed could only be a small part of what Sierra Leoneans needed to do: “Sierra Leone will be what you want it to be”.

Mr. Doss pointed out that the strengthening of the judiciary in Sierra Leone was but one aspect of a wider set of on-going reforms, which included decentralization. In this regard, he highlighted the importance of the up-coming local elections for the empowerment of local communities. Mr. Doss encouraged all registered voters to vote during the elections and called for free and fair elections: “violence-free elections would be the best vote of thanks Sierra Leoneans could give UNAMSIL and other partners for their efforts to restore peace in Sierra Leone”.

The Chief Justice of Sierra Leone, Abdulai Timbo commended UNDP for funding the construction of the magistrate courts and providing logistics for their functioning, and the National Commission for Social Action (NaCSA) for implementing the project. He committed to accelerate the process of assigning judges and magistrates to the provinces, with the support of partners. He also introduced Commonwealth Judges who were in Sierra Leone to complement the effort of the Judiciary. Chief

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Justice Timbo also announced that the government will be offering scholarships to law students at the University of Sierra Leone to encourage them to work for the government after completion of their studies.

The DSRSG was accompanied by the UNDP Deputy Resident Representative, Ms. Nancy Asanga, and Senior Officials from the Government of Sierra Leone, UNDP and UNAMSIL. Nine Magistrate Courts have been constructed throughout the country with UNDP funding through the Sierra Leone Reconstruction and Rehabilitation Program (SRRP), a joint UNDP-NaCSA program.

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