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(UNAMSIL)

PRESS BRIEFING

Near Verbatim

9 January 2004

**KEMAL SAIKI, Chief of Public Information, Spokesman
and Major Aliyu Yusuf, Military Spokesman**

New UNAMSIL SRSG Mwakawago arrives January 12

The newly appointed Special Representative of the Secretary General (SRSG) for Sierra Leone, Mr. Daudi Ngelautwa Mwakawago of Tanzania will arrive Freetown on Monday, January 12, to assume duties at the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone, UNAMSIL. Mr. Mwakawago succeeds Ambassador Oluyemi Adeniji who recently became Nigeria's Foreign Minister.

The Officer-in-Charge of UNAMSIL, Mr. Alan Doss and other senior military and civilian Mission personnel will receive the new SRSG at the Mammy Yoko UNAMSIL headquarters.

Mr. Mwakawago, before his new appointment, served as the Permanent Representative of the United Republic of Tanzania to the United Nations from 1994 to 2003. Prior to that, he had served in high positions in the Government of Tanzania, including as Minister for Information and Broadcasting (1972-1977), Minister of Information and Culture (1982-1983), Minister of Labour and Manpower Development (1983-1987), and Minister of Industry and Trade (1987).

The UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan announced the appointment of Mr. Mwakawago as SRSG on December 1, 2003.

UNAMSIL, RSLAF conduct joint exercise

The Sector East Quick Reaction Force, the Pakistan Battalion 9 of the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone, UNAMSIL, and troops from 3rd Brigade of the Republic of Sierra Leone Armed Forces, RSLAF, are conducting a joint tactical exercise code named "Exercise Hammer Strike" from January 5 - 15. The exercise is aimed at

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building the capacity of the government of Sierra Leone security sector and will take place in Gofa village in Zimmi general area, Eastern Sierra Leone.

The exercise is expected to highlight important lessons in multi-national environments and the capacity of RSLAF to cope in the wake of UNAMSIL adjustment, drawdown and withdrawal. Similarly, the intensive tactical operations will guard against spillover of negative trends from across the borders.

The Commander, Sector East, Brigadier General Sajjad Ahmed Bakhshi has visited peacekeepers at Zimmi where he was briefed on the conduct of the exercise. Brig. Gen. Bakhshi tasked the Pakistani peacekeepers to undertake responsibilities in as realistic environments as possible in the perceived threat scenario.

He also asked the conducting staff to have effective control over the overall conduct of the exercise.

The 10-day exercise will place emphasis on the coordination at various tiers of command between UNAMSIL troops from Pakbat IX and the RSLAF. Various procedures, techniques and drills for clearance of forested area will be practiced in the joint operations.

Côte d'Ivoire: Annan hails return of opposition group to Government

Voicing hope that the peace process in Côte d'Ivoire will gain new momentum, Secretary-General Kofi Annan January 7 welcomed the return of the opposition Forces Nouvelles to a meeting of the Government of National Reconciliation for the first time since it suspended its participation in September.

Mr. Annan urged all Ivorian parties to abide by their commitment to implement the Government's work programme and the Linas-Marcoussis peace agreement until the elections scheduled to be held in late 2005, according to a statement issued by his spokesman.

"The Secretary-General hopes that the return of the Forces Nouvelles to the Government will give fresh impetus to the peace process," spokesman Fred Eckhard said.

The agreement signed in Linas-Marcoussis, France, in January last year ended fierce fighting between the Government and rebel forces in the northern and western regions of the West African country.

A small United Nations mission (MINUCI) of 34 military liaison officers is in the country to monitor security and build confidence between the government's Forces

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Armees de Côte d'Ivoire and the northern Forces Nouvelles. French peacekeepers are stationed across Côte d'Ivoire with a view to separating rebel and government forces.

ACTION NEEDED NOW TO REACH HEALTH GOALS SET AT MILLENNIUM SUMMIT

Many developing countries will not be able to reach health-related Millennium Development Goals unless action is taken now and sustained over the next 12 years. That's the message from the World Health Organisation and the World Bank, which are hosting the first session of a high-level summit on the issue in Geneva today and Friday.

The health Goals include reducing maternal mortality, improving access to safe drinking water and essential drugs, and halving the number of people who suffer from hunger.

WHO and the World Bank add that lack of progress in the health area is likely to affect progress towards other Millennium Development Goals.

Questions and answers

Question: *I'm Arthur Caulker writing for The **Exclusive** newspaper. Recently there was this mock operation at the Special Court. How do you find that operation taking into consideration your peace and security operation. And, this is going to the man from UNHCR, how do you sort out Liberians posing as Sierra Leonean refugees.*

Kemal Saiki: Is part of UNAMSIL responsibility to maintain peace and security in the country. To this end, our military contingent conduct exercises on a regular basis. Our Military Spokesman will further elaborate on that.

Major Yusuf: Thank you. There was a contingency plan exercise at the Special Court on the 30th of December involving UNAMSIL troops deployed at the Special Court, RSLAF and SLP. The exercise was conducted without any hitches. A lot of lessons were learnt by the three forces deployed at the Special Court premises. Some of the lessons are that we have been able to test their communication equipment and see also how they could practice procedures and techniques in reaction to any eventuality. Similarly as you are all aware, the exercise is in accordance with the Adjustment, Drawdown and Withdrawal programme as mentioned earlier during the briefing. We have another exercise at the Presidential Lodge on the 15th of this month. This will be command-post exercise. It will not involve movement of troops. And we will be having a similar exercise on the 22nd of January which will now involve movement of troops among UNAMSIL, RSLAF AND SLP deployed at the Presidential Lodge. So these are

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continuous exercises within the framework of our Adjustment and Drawdown programme.

Idrissa Salam Conteh (UNHCR): There has been no action with regards to separating Liberian IDPs from Sierra Leonean refugees living together. What is important is the fact that where you have a situation where there is an IDP camp and refugee camp, it's delicate because if the Sierra Leonean refugees are receiving better assistance, their Liberian counterparts who are IDPs and are also suffering can pounce on the refugees and it can become a problem. So, normally, if you have a situation like this, we give the IDPs the benefit of the doubt so they receive the same treatment like the refugees but I think I must signal the fact that we will soon embark on promotional repatriation which will end around March 2004. This means when the Sierra Leoneans might have returned home those who would stay behind will stop getting assistance from the UNHCR and that is the time the IDPs will become real IDPs.

***Question:** I'm Agnes Pratt representing **The News**. This question is for the UNHCR Information Officer. I would like to know the number of orphaned children you have received.*

Idrissa Salam Conteh (UNHCR): We have got statistics of all Sierra Leoneans who are outside the country and are under our care and we have got mechanisms in place for second rated minors or unaccompanied children. And by a child we mean somebody that's below the age of 18 so before a group of refugees is repatriated, and we have got minors or unaccompanied children, they are registered by the Red Cross in collaboration with the UNHCR. So before they arrive here we know how many children are coming and where they are going if they can still recall the names of their parents. So we do family tracing. As for the number of orphaned children I do not have that here. If you come to my office, I will give you that information.

***Question:** My name is Idris Gbange I write for the **New People**. My question is for Major Yusuf. You spoke about the Adjustment programme. I would like to know from which areas they are withdrawing and the countries the withdrawing troops are from. Thank you.*

Maj. Yusuf: The ADW has been on since the year 2002 as you all know. Apparently we are on the third phase. Right now we are about withdrawing from the Sector Centre. This will take place in June but it all depends on the Security Council's approval which we are still waiting for but the plan is that by June 2004 all the UNAMSIL troops in Sector Centre will not be there except the Military Observers. So right now our troops' strength is about 11,500. By June it will reduce to about 10,200 then it will be going down in that phase until December 2004 when UNAMSIL will be saying goodbye to Sierra Leone.

***Question:** I'm Edward Renner from Christian Monitor. This is for the UNHCR man. Sir do you check refugees that are to be repatriated from Liberia for HIV/AIDS and other transmitted diseases?*

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Idrissa Salam Conteh (UNHCR): Well I'm not sure. It's a very controversial issue. All I can tell you is that refugees who are living in the camps and those who are being taken care of by UNHCR are aware of HIV/AIDS menace and are being sensitized. Like any other Sierra Leonean traveling outside here, I'm not sure if you want to go to Guinea somebody will have to test you for HIV/AIDS at the border.

***Question:** This is for Mr. Saiki. Very soon UNAMSIL will be leaving the shores of Sierra Leone so how can you assess the security situation in the country. Or is UNAMSIL leaving because there is no more money?*

Kemal Saiki: Concerning the first part of your question, how do we assess the security situation? Well, since the Mission has been here for some time now, I'm sure you know how it works. UNAMSIL military and civilian components are present all over the country. We have the military contingents in the various sectors. We have the Military Observers, MILOBS, who are all over the country. We have the Civilian Police who are all over the country as well. So we are on the ground. Our own assessments give us, day in day out, an informed picture of the country's security situation and enable to exercise our responsibility of maintaining peace and security in Sierra Leone. Concerning the other issue, it was clearly mentioned that UN missions cannot continue indefinitely. The duration of our mission here will depend more the kind of situation we have on the ground, rather than on financial parameters.

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