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PRESS BRIEFING HIGHLIGHTS

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Near Verbatim

**MS SHEILA DALLAS, EXECUTIVE PRODUCER AND STATION MANAGER –
RADIO UNAMSIL
MAJOR ONYEMA NWACHUKWU, MILITARY SPOKESMAN**

Sheila Dallas: I would like to let you know that all the bodies of the 24 who perished in the helicopter crash of the 29th have been ...well 15 soldiers; 14 Pakistanis, one Bangladeshi, have been repatriated to their home countries, a UNV who is from Ghana has also been repatriated, and the IRC, through, UN, UNAMSIL assisted repatriation of that body, as far as from Freetown to Lungi international airport, where IRC chartered plane will take both men to their respective countries. We have one funeral today which is the last of the 24. That is Victoria Robert who worked for COOPI, and this will take place at half past 12 today, at the St. Anthony's Church, near the stadium, and the burial will be right around the corner at the cemetery there. As a result of the release last Sunday of all the bodies, this lays to rest the forensic expert's checking of the bodies to ensure the very fact of those who were in the crash. All that has been done and I am happy to report. In addition, we are pleased to announce that the helicopter crash, the handling of the crash in terms of investigations, we have some experts here in Sierra Leone, but the government has taken over that responsibility to investigate. As you know, Aviation Authority in any country, if you are flying over, and there is a crash in that country, of course it is the responsibility of the government to investigate, and the government has willingly taken over, and is working with UNAMSIL in terms of investigation. The sight is secured, the crash site, well secured, we have security there, the RSLAF, and others. I just want to introduce, Mr. Chernon Jallow, Civil Affairs Officer. Our Military Spokesman, who I'm sure you all know, who is going to talk to you.

Major Onyema Nwachukwu: Thank you very much Sheila of Radio Unit. I don't have much to say, I just want to assure the people of Sierra Leone. In terms of security, we are still very much on our guard, and the fact that we are repatriating some elements of UNAMSIL troops does not imply that we have left a vacuum security wise in this area, especially talking about the different Sector centre, which has sparked off, of course we are right now repatriating, in that area we very sure we've make that available a revolving

battalion, made up of GHANBATT 9. It is at the Force Commander's disposal to make sure that security is very much in place in that general area. Talking about the border of course, we are working collaboratively with UNMIL, Liberia or Monrovia, so to speak, to ensure that we take patrols, air and ground patrols and carry out in those areas. Talking about humanitarian activities in these areas that we have repatriated our troops, of course we want to assure the people of Sierra Leone that, we have chiefdoms in these areas, whatever problems they have in terms of human threat, assistance can be made available to these chiefdoms, and of course, those in charge of those chiefdoms, know what to do. On that note I will hand you over to Sheila.

Sheila Dallas: All right thank you... I will now give the floor to Mr Chernó Jallow, a Civil Affairs Officer in UNAMSIL's Civil Affairs Section who has been in charge of the UNAMSIL Trust Fund for the past one year.

Chernó Jallow: Thank you very much Sheila. Ladies and Gentlemen. Just to give you a quick historical background of the Trust Fund, which has been involved in the implementation of to date 73 small-scale quick impact core projects throughout the country. The Trust Fund serves as a quick flexible disbursement mechanism that was set up following the third report of the Secretary-General, on UNAMSIL in 2000. The idea was to support the implementation of the Lomé Peace Agreement, which serves as the bedrock, of course, of all that is happening here in Sierra Leone. And our activities range from the consolidation of state authority, which is the main focus actually of Civil Affairs, and to support in other peace building efforts and rebuilding of communities countrywide.

We have today disbursed \$1.3 million and implemented about 73 projects country-wide and have rehabilitated and constructed about 10 police stations, we have constructed about five magistrate courts in various districts, especially in the north, Bombali, Koinadugu, Tonkolili, and in Kono, in the east...and we have also constructed and rehabilitated a dozen of schools country-wide. We have also been involved in facilitating the reintegration process, especially of returnees, ex-combatants, child soldiers, abductees, and also involved in promoting peace and reconciliation, through sensitization and skilled training...and also through peace education programmes in some schools, especially in the western area here. That's one aspect of the Trust Fund which is funded from voluntary contributions from donor countries like Italy, Canada, the Swiss Government and also through savings realized from previous projects put at our disposal by the controller in New York. The other aspect of the Trust Fund is the contingent implemented projects generally known as Quick Impact Projects (QIP) which basically is a new concept. If it turns out to be successful it will be replicated in other Missions. So for the first time last year, a provision of \$240,000 was put in the UNAMSIL regular budget for this purpose and the idea is to promote both civil and military relationship...that is to endear the military contingents serving in Sierra Leone to the hearts and minds of the populace they are serving in their respective areas of operation. And under this project, under this scheme I'm happy to report that 21 projects were undertaken countrywide. The rehabilitation of schools, building of health facilities, skills trainings and agricultural project. 18 out of these have already been completed and

commissioned and three of them have also been completed and are waiting commissioning by the SRSG. So based on the success of these QIPs, implemented by the military, New York has approved an extra amount of \$118, 000 for the current fiscal year to build on what has been achieved over the last financial year. So right now we have written to all Civil Affairs Officers and the Military contingents to work together with all stakeholders in the field so that they would come up with project proposals that could be implemented within this six-month period and by next week, we hope to start looking at these project proposals which would be processed through the Project Approval Committee which is actually the screening body of the Trust Fund and it comprises all sections of UNAMSIL and is chaired by the Chief of Civil Affairs and the secretariat is housed in the office of the Civil Affairs Section of UNAMSIL. We've done a lot. About two weeks ago we were honoured to have the SRSG to commission one of our projects in Rosinor in Kambia...and it was a very big event...the population was happy. We want to ensure that our projects are sustainable so we don't do it alone as we involve the Sierra Leone government...we make sure that all the stakeholders are involved from the planning, implementation and to the upkeep stage of the facility. So for the time being I would stop there and if there are any questions, I'm at your disposal.

Sheila Dallas: Thank you Chernob...any questions?

Question: My name is Idriss Bangay and I write for the New People newspaper. I have two questions...one for Major. The first one I just want you to tell me the current strength of UNAMSIL troops and then there were two reserved battalions I just want to know whether you still have them. And then to Mr. Jallow, I want to know whether under these QIPs if you have anything for the Sierra Leone Police Force like construction of police stations.

Major Onyema Nwachukwu: Talking about the current strength of UNAMSIL troops, at the moment, we want to put it at 13,500 troops. And the reserve force you were talking about, the Force Commander Reserve Force of course is GHANBATT 9 and of course it's a battalion strength. It's a roving force that can be called upon. It can be used by the Force Commander in any part of Sierra Leone. And then we also have the Reserve Company which is under the command of KENBATT 7 at Masiaka. That company can also be utilized by the Force Commander or whosoever is in charge whenever there is a crisis.

Chernob Jallow: Thank you very much. Concerning your question about the possible construction of police stations around the Waterloo area, I just want to take you back. In my presentation I told you that we have already constructed or we are in the process of constructing about ten to 14 police stations. We have constructed police stations in Calaba Town, Tombo, Tankoro, Blama, Mattrujong, Koidu Town, Siafe, Ganguhun, Bunbuna, Mano Junction, Shenge, Sumbuya to name but a few. Of these only Ganguhun and Sumbuya are yet to be completed. We are willing to embark on the constructions of police stations but we need to be guided by the competent authorities which are CIVPOL and the SLP. They have come up with their priority list for the construction of police

stations and it's on the basis of that list that they are soliciting funding from us to assist in the construction of these police stations.

Question: Zainab Kanu from SKYY Radio. Almost two weeks ago, Radio UNAMSIL presenter DJ Base faced serious brutality in the hands of the police...I just want you to tell me what has been UNAMSIL's action towards that ugly incident.

Sheila Dallas: All right thank you for that... the investigation is underway. Our Chief of Security and our CIVPOL are working hand in hand with the Sierra Leone Police on the investigation to ensure that proper investigations are carried out. That's it? Thank you very much for coming.