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PRESS RELEASE

**SRSG DECORATES UNAMSIL NIGERIAN PEACEKEEPERS WITH UN MEDAL OF
HONOUR**



Freetown –UNAMSIL Special Representative of the Secretary-General (SRSG), Ambassador Daudi Ngelautwa Mwakawago, decorated, at an impressive ceremony held at the Wilberforce Barracks in Freetown, on Saturday 8th May 2004, the peacekeepers of Nigeria Battalions NIBATT 17 and 18. Referring to Nigeria's participation to peacekeeping in the world in general, and in Sierra Leone since 1991 in particular, SRSG Mwakawago commended the peacekeepers for their role in restoring stability to Sierra Leone and for their contribution to the success of

UNAMSIL.

He noted with satisfaction the humanitarian assistance rendered by the Nigerian contingent to the people of Sierra Leone. "I have followed with keen interest the humanitarian work extended to the citizens of this country within the contingent's area of responsibility. This includes the renovation of blocks of classrooms at Goderich and Murray Town, renovation of churches and mosques, construction and furnishing of the Port Loko Home Economics Center, renovation of Port Loko Teachers' College and, recently, a block at Baptist Convention Headquarters in Lunsar."

He further declared that "the contingent has also constructed and rehabilitated the Youth Development Centre at Wilberforce". While handing the latter over to the Deputy Minister of Defense, Mr. Joe Blell, the SRSG expressed hope that the center would be used for its intended purpose and make the youths of the area busy and become self reliant. Ambassador Mwakawago also said that the contingent would undertake the extension of the Kissy Police station, in addition to the donation of a "substantial quantity of food items and clothing to amputee camps and orphanages, and also assisting in the renovation of a historic well in Murray Town, their host community."

He called on the peacekeepers to continue with such gestures. "These commendable efforts should continue as they help draw into focus the humane side of soldiers, ensure confidence building, cooperation and understanding between the contingent and their hosts, while at the same time winning the hearts and minds of the people." The SRSG welcomed the Nigerian Chief of Defense Staff, Gen A.O. Ogomudia to UNAMSIL, and commended the Commander of Sector West, Brig Gen A. N. Bamali, the Commanding Officers of NIBATT 17, Lt Col S.P. Ovadje, and NIBATT 18,

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Lt Col CVC Okosieme and the officers, women and men of the contingent. He said, "We acknowledged very affectionately your excellent contribution to the stability and calmness the people of Sierra Leone are enjoying. The hard-won peace has to be nurtured and extended through the hard work and commitment of all Sierra Leoneans." SRSG Mwakawago added "the present window of opportunity of concerted effort and focus by the international community will not last forever." And he "urged all Sierra Leoneans to marshal their energies and cement partnership." Although the peacekeepers deserved their medals, they should take up the challenge of going higher and continue to work hard.

The Nigerian Chief of Defense Staff, Gen AO Ogumodia, and Maj Gen Sajjad Akram, UNAMSIL Force Commander assisted the SRSG in decorating the peacekeepers. The ceremony was also witnessed by Nigeria High Commissioner to Sierra Leone, Mohamed Yerima, Sierra Leone Deputy Defense Minister Joe Blell, all UNAMSIL Sector Commanders, senior UNAMSIL and Republic of Sierra Leone Armed Forces Officers and UN officials.

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