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## **PRESS RELEASE**

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### **UNAMSIL MARKS INTERNATIONAL DAY OF PEACE**

*Freetown, Sierra Leone* – The United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL) was on Friday 17 September joined by other United Nations agencies and senior Ministers of the Government of Sierra Leone in marking the International Day of Peace, traditionally observed on 21 September each year, at its headquarters in Mammy Yoko, Freetown.

The multi-faceted observance commenced with the raising of the UN and Sierra Leonean flags by two national athletes, including Lamin Tucker who participated in the recent Olympics in Athens.

UNAMSIL Force Commander, Major General Sajjad Akram, read a statement on behalf of UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan. It stressed the importance of the day saying this year's observance was especially significant as it marked 50 years since the Peace Bell had been presented to the United Nations by the UN Association of Japan. Since then, "the bell has sent a powerful message around the world about humankind's aspiration for peace. Throughout that time -- from the height of the Cold War to the rise of intrastate conflicts, from the spread of the AIDS crisis to the escalation of terrorism -- the call of the bell has remained constant, clear and true." The bell is cast from coins collected by children from 60 countries.

Furthermore, as the world's countries gathered for the fifty-ninth General Assembly, "we know there will be many challenges before us. To meet them effectively, I believe a number of fundamental priorities merit a special claim on our attention." The Secretary-General entreated staff to keep working to strengthen the system of collective security, "and make sure it is up to the task of meeting the threats of the 21st century."

He called for the need to build greater international solidarity in tackling grave humanitarian emergencies, such as the one in Darfur, Sudan, as well as forging a true global partnership for development, to fight hunger, ignorance, poverty and disease.

Minister of Youth and Sport, Dr Dennis Bright said one of the ways peace could be sustained was through sport. The skills and values learned were the same as those taught in peace education in efforts to resolve and prevent conflict and create conditions conducive to peace.

Following the morning's ceremony, eighty children and youth joined, through video links, peers in other UN missions in Afghanistan and Kosovo, and in Athens for a discussion on the correlation between sports and peace.

On Saturday, celebrations moved to the National Stadium where volleyball and football matches as well as track events took place between staff members of the UN family in Sierra Leone and communities from various sections Freetown.

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