



PRESS RELEASE

Ref No UNAMSIL/PIO/PR/215/2005

Date: 15 February 2005

UN COUNTRY TEAMS BASED IN MANO RIVER UNION (MRU) COUNTRIES MEET IN FREETOWN

Freetown, Sierra Leone – A two-day consultative meeting of United Nations Country Teams in the Mano River Union (MRU) began in Freetown today to discuss challenges that countries of the sub-region and Côte d’Ivoire presently face.

Opening the forum, Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary-General (DSRSG) for Sierra Leone and head of the UN country team, J. Victor Angelo said the recent history of conflicts, and socio-economic and political developments in the sub-region amply demonstrated that challenges facing the countries were intertwined. Therefore, collaborative efforts of Governments and institutions in the sub-region, together with those of United Nations and other external partners, were required to solve their problems. Furthermore, that approach entailed revitalization and strengthening of intergovernmental mechanisms in the sub-region.

He noted that Sierra Leone was presently in the transition phase from recovery to long-term development and Liberia was focusing on emergency and recovery. Meanwhile, Cote d’Ivoire was still grappling with the restoration of peace and the situation in Guinea was connected with developments in the three countries.

Further, Mr. Victor Angelo encouraged participants to explore means of strengthening collaboration among UN agencies in the MRU countries in dealing with key challenges, and peace and development issues. They must identify commonalities for agreement on a joint framework, he stressed.

In his remarks, Sierra Leone’s Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, Momodu Koroma, called for an examination of matters relevant to the resuscitation of the secretariat of the MRU and payment of salary arrears to its staff, confidence building measures for citizens of border areas, joint efforts to stop smuggling of diamonds and other illegal cross border activities, and the development of regional infrastructures. Regarding social services, he underscored the need for capacity building initiatives and fostering of a regional approach to ensuring food security and combating HIV/AIDS, malaria and polio.

Mr. Koroma acknowledged the proliferation of small arms and the problem of remaining ex-combatants and emphasized that collective effort was necessary to solve current set of conflicts.

Representing the Special Representative of the Secretary-General (SRSG) for Sierra Leone, Ambassador Daudi N. Mwakawago, UNAMSIL’s Chief of Civil Affairs, George Adetuberu, urged participants to draw up an inter-country team plan for the MRU that will focus on attaining sustainable peace and economic development by effectively utilizing the resources of these three countries.



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The Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Liberia and Head of UNDP, Abou Moussa, and UN Resident Coordinator in Guinea, Mr. Kingsley Amaning, also gave presentations on the situations in their respective countries. Among those attending the two-day meeting are the National Security Coordinator of Sierra Leone and diplomatic representatives from France, Germany, Japan, Switzerland, the United Kingdom and United States.

Deliberations will tomorrow focus on the challenges ahead and culminate with the adoption of a statement.
