



PRESS RELEASE

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STATEMENT BY AMBASSADOR DAUDI MWAKAWAGO OUTLINING FUTURE PLANS FOR SIERRA LEONE

Good afternoon ladies and gentleman of the press, it is indeed a pleasure to address you today. This is my first press briefing for the year. The situation in the country is calm and stable.

I visited Washington and New York for a week and returned to Sierra Leone on Sunday. Whilst in Washington, I had consecutive meetings with the Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs, Ms. Constance Newman and the Assistant Secretary of State responsible for War Crimes, Mr. Pierre Richards. They were briefed on the progress of the drawdown process, implementation of benchmarks set by the Security Council and the challenges that needed to be addressed, especially the poor state of the economy, youth unemployment, the many constraints affecting the RSLAF and the situation in Liberia, Côte d'Ivoire and Guinea.

I appealed to Ms. Newman to use her good offices in securing assistance for the RSLAF as the army needed vehicles, barracks, fuel and water tanks, among other resources. Ms. Newman congratulated UNAMSIL (the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone) for a job well done and expressed satisfaction at the stance adopted by the African Union and ECOWAS regarding the crisis in Togo, which she indicated augured well for the deepening of democracy and good governance in Africa. She expressed US support for the extension of UNAMSIL's mandate up to the end of December 2005. Ms. Newman articulated special interest in the progress of the reintegration process in the various missions. She was of the view that the reintegration issue was not adequately handled in most of the missions, with the notable exceptions of Cambodia and Mozambique. She therefore advised that a special conference aimed at developing a template for the conduct of Reintegration of ex-combatants be conceived – I informed her of the initiative that Ambassador Gambari, the Secretary-General's Special Adviser on Africa has taken in this regard.

The discussions with Mr. Pierre Richards, the Assistant Secretary of State for War Crimes, revolved essentially around the mandate of the Special Court and post-UNAMSIL security arrangements for the Court.

I also had meetings with professional staff of both the Congress and the Senate as well as with members of Inter Action, a coalition of NGOs with considerable influence. These discussions with the professional staff of the Congress and the Senate also gravitated around the Special Court for Sierra Leone and its security after UNAMSIL. Inter Action was interested in the disposal of UNAMSIL assets and the economic predicament of Sierra Leone and the role of the UK in helping to address it, special programmes for the disabled and GOSL control of diamond mining.



UNAMSIL **United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone**

I left Washington for New York where I met with the Secretary-General, Kofi Annan and other high-ranking officials of DPKO. Those discussions focused on the assessment of the current situation in UNAMSIL. They informed me that that they will soon be sending an assessment team to Sierra Leone.

I met with the Permanent Representatives of the UK, India, the Netherlands, Japan, Nigeria and Switzerland to the United Nations on the progress of the drawdown process, particularly on challenges in the security and economic situations as well as on ongoing efforts to address them with assistance from the international community. I discussed with the Indian envoy possible assistance by India to the RSLAF, especially for the construction of barracks as well as the provision of other forms of assistance in the economic domain. With the Japanese Permanent Representative, I talked about the possible contribution towards the replenishment of the Mission's Trust Fund as well as assistance and support to Sierra Leone in the area of community-based projects.
