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PRESS RELEASE

SRSG, DONORS, TOUR BUMBUNA HYDRO-ELECTRIC DAM SITE



Freetown – The Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General in Sierra Leone (SRSG), Ambassador Daudi Ngelautwa Mwakawago and a joint delegation from the Italian Government, the World Bank, the African Development Bank and Sierra Leone's Ambassador to Italy, Umaru Wurie, today visited the Bumbuna Hydroelectric Project site in the Northern Provincial district of Tonkolili.

Taking the delegation on a tour of the site, the Area Manager for the construction company, *Salini Costruttori* (SALCOST), Engineer Christian Fabio Capitanio said that dam would have a capacity of 300 million cubic-metres for an electricity production of 50 megawatts, but added that a second phase of the project planned for a second dam at Yben, upstream of the current site, with a reservoir capacity ten times larger. He said the Bumbuna dam would be completed in twenty four months, once work resumed later this year, and would supply the capital Freetown and such large northern province towns as the provincial headquarters of Makeni, the Tonkolili district headquarter town of Magburaka and Lunsar in the Port Loko district. He pointed out, however, that the dam would not produce electricity at full capacity all year-long, as production would be reduced during the dry season to account for lower water levels at that time.

Responding to a concern raised by the SRSG about the apparent decrepit state of some of the machines and equipment on the site, Mr Capitanio said that, whereas he was worried about the electrical equipments, he had no such worries concerning the mechanical ones. Mr Capitanio added that, once the expected experts arrived, they would advise on the state of the equipment which had been idle for a long time as a result of the funding gap for the completion of the work, which cost is estimated at \$ 62 millions, and the civil war in the country.

On the issue raised by the SRSG, of how the local community would benefit from the presence of the dam, the SALCOST Area Manager said Bumbuna town would get full-fledged electricity, as well as other social benefits. The company would employ about 500 Sierra Leoneans many of whom, he said, would come from the area. He added that SALCOST has already built a bridge at a nearby location where river crossing was done by ferry when work first started in 1976. He said

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that his company had a good working relationship with the traditional leaders in the area, saying “they are our best friends... [and] have been very supportive.”

The delegation visited the civil works facilities including a power house, the main transformer, the massive 88-metre-high rock fill dam flanked by two massive spillways to forestall any spillover of water, switchyard, two diversion tunnels, spillway discharges, bottom outlet and a valley that provides an excellent farewell to the passing water.

Funds for the completion of the Bumbuna hydroelectric project were pledged at the end of a development partnership meeting last year between the Government of Sierra Leone and donors with the Italian Government agreeing to finance the largest amount, with the World Bank, OPEC Fund and the African Development Bank providing the balance.

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