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## **PRESS RELEASE**

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### **SIERRA LEONE POVERTY REDUCTION STRATEGY RECEIVES FURTHER CONSIDERATION**

*Freetown, Sierra Leone* – The ninth meeting of the Development Partnership Committee (DEPAC) which brought together the Government of Sierra Leone, the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL) and all UN agencies based in the country, and international and national development partners, took place in Freetown on Thursday 16 September with discussions focusing mainly on the country's Poverty Reduction Strategy.

Other issues, including the marine and mineral resources sectors, and food security, were raised at this forum. Cross-border activities related to small arms and ex-combatants movements in the sub-region, as well as the drawdown of UNAMSIL peacekeepers were also discussed, with a view to linking them to the poverty reduction strategy.

Chairman of the event, Vice President Solomon Berewa, in his opening remarks said his Government was “committed to ensuring that a robust security apparatus is in place” by the time UNAMSIL forces finally pulled out. He also noted positive developments in the area of diamond exports which, at the end of last August, reached an estimated US\$ 90 million with alluvial products accounting for more than US\$ 72 million and kimberlite over US\$ 8 million.

The Vice President spoke about progress made in the Consultative Group Results Framework, outlining issues such as procurement reform, the divestiture of public enterprises, trade, and the poverty reduction strategy.

In their keynote addresses, the World Bank and UNDP co-chairs observed that the draft poverty reduction strategy paper (PRSP) was paramount to poverty reduction in Sierra Leone. The World Bank co-chair, James Sackey, stressed that this strategy would constitute a turning point from recovery to development.

The draft PRSP, which puts 70% of Sierra Leoneans below the US \$1 poverty line, outlines national priorities for poverty reduction over the next three years. The meeting agreed that food security and job creation were the bedrock for poverty reduction in the country. In achieving this, the promotion of good governance, peace and security and a pro-poor growth within a healthy macroeconomic framework were encouraged.

The forum further emphasized the role of the local councils saying it would be crucial in reaching the objectives of the national poverty reduction strategy and should be brought to the fore.

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