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PRESS RELEASE

**UNAMSIL HANDS OVER SECURITY PRIMACY OF NORTHERN SIERRA LEONE TO SIERRA LEONE GOVERNMENT**



**Freetown** – The United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL) has today handed over security primacy of the Northern Province to the Government of Sierra Leone at a colorful ceremony attended by the Vice President Hon. Solomon Berewa, the Deputy Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General (DSRSG) for Governance and Stabilization, Mr. Alan Doss, the UNAMSIL Force Commander Maj. Gen Sajjad Akram, Government Ministers including the Deputy Defense Minister Joe Blell and Members of Parliament from the region. The ceremony was climaxed by an emotional symbolic transfer of control of security in a region that has five of the country’s 12 provincial districts, when the UNAMSIL Commander of Sector Centre in charge of the north, Brig. Gen. Shafiq Uzzaman handed over a red-ribboned file to the Regional Commissioner of the Sierra Leone Police, Christopher John.

Speaking at the ceremony at the Wusum Grounds in the provincial headquarter town of Makeni, Vice President Berewa said the “significant, moving and sad moment” of transfer was a manifestation that “UNAMSIL have accomplished their mission”. He praised the peacekeepers’ “immense contribution in the return of peace to Sierra Leone” as well as their humanitarian and other social assistance to the communities. “The Republic of Sierra Leone Armed Forces and the Sierra Leone Police are prepared to take up the security challenges after UNAMSIL” he assured, saying that a number of command post exercises had been held in all districts, which had tested the Army’s capacity to ward off any threat from outside and the Police’s ability to ensure internal

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security and law and order. “The national security apparatus is more reliable now” he assured, adding “the people of the north have nothing to fear. Your security is guaranteed”. The Vice President urged all Sierra Leoneans to cooperate with the security forces in ensuring their security.

Handing over security primacy, the DSRSG congratulated the people of the area for this “very important and momentous occasion [which]... is a tangible sign of this nation’s return to peace and stability, and evidence of the growing confidence in the ability of the country’s security agencies to uphold the rule of law.” He recalled his first visit to Makeni some three years ago when the area was deserted without any police. Now, he said, the SLP had expanded both in size and quality engendered by training and professionalism, with support from UNAMSIL and the Commonwealth. He added that with the help of the International Military Training team (IMATT) “the RSLAF is becoming a more operationally focused guardian of national sovereignty.” He applauded the “substantial progress, made [by] the Office of National Security, in forming the Provincial and District Security Committees (the PROSECs and DISECs).”

The DSRSG reminded his audience of the recent UN Security Council resolution for an “extended drawdown of UNAMSIL, but emphasized that this should not lead delay the Government’s assumption of its responsibility for security throughout the country. “It is reassuring to know and see here today that the Sierra Leonean people are well on the way to assuming full responsibility for their own security and their own destiny. We will continue to do all we can, in partnership with Sierra Leone, to ensure a seamless transfer of responsibility over these coming months.” He urged the RSLAF and the SLP to work together as “effective cooperation... is vital for Sierra Leone”. He called on the people to reinforce the efforts of the security forces in ensuring security, notably during the up-coming local government election, saying “when you work together, miracles can indeed be achieved”.

The host Paramount Chief, PC Bai Shebora Kasanga 11 said they were happy that their region was deemed mature enough to be handed over and expressed the region’s Paramount Chiefs’ commitment to the consolidation of peace. He expressed confidence in the Army and Police and appealed for the Army to be given the capacity to be able to carry out such humanitarian assistance as was done by the UNAMSIL peacekeepers.

Also present at the ceremony were the Chief of Defense Staff of the RSLAF, Maj. Gen. Sam Mbomah, the Inspector General of Police, Brima Acha Kamara, the IMATT Commander Brigadier Simon Porter, UNAMSIL Sector Commanders and Paramount Chiefs from the various districts in the north.

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