

UNITED NATIONS



NATIONS UNIES

UNITED NATIONS MISSION IN SIERRA LEONE
(UNAMSIL)

PRESS RELEASE

Ref No UNAMSIL/PIO/PR256 /2005

UNAMSIL's DSRSG UNDERSCORES UNITED NATIONS SECURITY COUNCIL'S RESOLUTION 1325 ON WOMEN, PEACE AND SECURITY

Freetown, Sierra Leone, 24 August 2005 --- The Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary General (DSRSG) and UNDP Resident Representative for Sierra Leone, Mr. Victor Angelo, has disclosed that there are serious gender disparities in Sierra Leone which are capable of frustrating any attempt at sustainable development if not adequately addressed.

Mr. Victor Angelo stated this while addressing participants at a one-day workshop on United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 organized by the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL) at the Mission's headquarters at Aberdeen, west of the capital Freetown.

Stressing the need for gender sensitivity, the DSRSG averred that when development projects and programmes like micro-credits schemes were gender blind, they ended up benefiting men who already control economic and political power. He therefore called on the government and Non Government Organizations operating in the country to give top priority attention to the political and economic empowerment of women in their development programmes and projects, adding that investing in women was not only an investment in poverty reduction but also in social and basic needs of the family and the household.

Mr. Victor Angelo lamented that very often projects and programmes including peacekeeping operations and post conflict situations were not gender sensitive. He stated that Resolution 1325 was all about ensuring that peacekeeping operations and post-conflict initiatives take into account the needs and requirements of women and children particularly the girl child.

The DSRSG called for the promotion of national ownership which he defined as

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the ability to decide what should be on the agenda, what should be the priorities and where the money should be invested. He told participants that Sierra Leone would not experience any sustainable development if it could not combine national resources with resources coming from donor countries, adding that one of the ways of attracting money from the donor community was to show more commitment in resource mobilization as well as its judicious use.

Mr. Victor Angelo also called for more women participation in the security forces and the judiciary adding “we can not have a justice system that is made up of basically men when 50% cases are related to women.”

In her opening statement at the workshop, the Deputy Minister for Social Welfare, Gender and Children Affairs, Ms Memunatu Koroma disclosed that the policies of “Gender Mainstreaming” and the “Advancement of Women” were enacted in 2000 with the overall goal of mainstreaming gender concerns in the national development process in order to improve the social, legal, political and economic as well as cultural conditions of marginalized groups. She noted that the policy of the Advancement of Women aimed at empowering women for sustainable growth.

According to Ms. Theresa Kombobe, the Gender Adviser in the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary General (SRSG), the workshop aims at creating awareness in Sierra Leone on the Resolution, build the capacity of the Gender Ministry and its partners, and to facilitate the utilization of the Resolution on gender issues in Sierra Leone