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## Press Release

### UNAMSIL FORCE COMMANDER MEETS SIERRA LEONE'S CHIEF OF DEFENCE STAFF

*Freetown* - The Force Commander of the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL), Major General Sajjad Akram today met the Chief of Defence Staff (CDS) of the Republic of Sierra Leone Armed Forces (RSLAF), Major General Edwin Sam-Mbomah at his Force Headquarters office at Mammy Yoko in Freetown.

Welcoming the CDS and members of his entourage, the Force Commander said the meeting was “a unique opportunity to rub minds” but “more importantly” to discuss details of UNAMSIL’s drawdown plan and how to completely hand over security to the Sierra Leone security forces.

General Akram said that such meetings would provide the avenue for bringing into focus those areas of training, relevant to the RSLAF where UNAMSIL could be of assistance. He pointed out that the handing over of security primacy to the national security agencies was already on; adding that security in the northern provincial district of Bombali had just been successfully handed over. He urged the RSLAF to participate more actively in training exercises organized by UNAMSIL in preparation for the final withdrawal of the peacekeepers.

Responding, Major General Sam-Mbomah said that with the drawdown and eventual pull-out of UNAMSIL, he had urged the United Nations through the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) in a recent meeting in Abuja, Nigeria to leave behind a “formidable force” to prevent the situations in Liberia and Cote d’Ivoire from spilling over into Sierra Leone, thereby rendering futile the peace efforts of UNAMSIL.

Other senior military officers in attendance were UNAMSIL’s Deputy Force Commander, Brigadier Adrian Foster; Commanders of UNAMSIL’s Sector West, Brigadier General Nuhu Bamali, Sector Centre Brigadier General Shaffik Uzzaman and Sector East Col. Sajjad Ahmed Bakshi. From the RSLAF were Commander Joint Force

Headquarters, Brigadier General MA Alli; Commander 3<sup>rd</sup> Brigade Colonel SA Sina, Commander 4<sup>th</sup> Brigade Colonel FK Kamara, Commander 5<sup>th</sup> Brigade Colonel KSM Mondeh and the Director of Commitment and Plans Colonel SO Williams.