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PRESS RELEASE

**SIERRA LEONE POLICE AND LIBERIA NATIONAL POLICE AGREE TO
STEM ILLEGAL BORDER ACTIVITY**



Liberian National Police, Sierra Leone Police and UNAMSIL CIVPOL delegations, Monrovia

Freetown - The Sierra Leone Police (SLP) led by its Deputy Inspector General Oliver Somassa and its Liberian counterpart, the Liberia National Police (LNP) led by its Deputy Director Joseph Kekula today met at the LNP headquarters in the Liberian Capital, Monrovia under the aegis of the Civilian Police forces of the United Nations Missions in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL) and in Liberia (UNMIL).

At the end of the one-day meeting, the four institutions signed a communiqué stressing the need for the two Mano River Union countries to stem drug trafficking, illegal trafficking in women, child soldier

and diamonds, cross-border small arms proliferation, illegal trafficking of scarce commodities and address security concerns on movement of refugees and training needs to suit local policing needs in their countries. The meeting agreed on a follow-up meeting to be held in Freetown in the near future.

Earlier, the UNAMSIL CIVPOL Commissioner, Hudson Benzu said the meeting was in reaction to concerns by the UN Security Council about cross-border activity in the sub-region. He said the Special Representatives of the UN Secretary-General and the Force Commanders in West Africa had held a series of meetings on, among other issues, disarmament and that of ex-combatants. Commissioner Benzu, however, said the Monrovia meeting was aimed at stemming illegal cross-border activity that could endanger the peace processes in Liberia and Sierra Leone if not curbed.



Sierra Leone Police, UNMIL CIVPOL and UNAMSIL CIVPOL Delegations

The UNMIL CIVPOL Commissioner, Mark Kroeker said the Liberian National Police, which will soon be renamed the Liberia Police Services, was “stripped of all its resources” as a result of the civil war, adding that the country needed “an entirely new police force”. He said the LNP lacked equipment, technology and even uniforms, assuring that CIVPOL would do everything it could to change that picture.

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SLP Deputy Inspector General said the issue of drugs was a serious one in the Sierra Leone, where, he said, marijuana was prevalent both in its abuse and cultivation and that there had been arrests lately of traffickers in harder drugs including cocaine and heroine. Mr. Somassa called for a unified strategy in the fight against organized criminals whom, he said, were richer and more powerful than even some state Governments.

SLP Senior Assistant Commissioner of Police for Standard, Mrs. Kadi Fakondor, said a steady trafficking of women and children was going on and called on the police forces in the two countries to raise awareness. She urged the Liberian police to establish specialized agencies for women and children's matters as had been done in Sierra Leone.

The Deputy Director of the LNP, Joseph Kekula conceded that the issue of drugs was a major problem in his country. He said the incapacity of his force had made the whole fight against it even more difficult but went on to say, that notwithstanding, some gains were made thanks to the arrest of some traffickers who had been using the porous Sierra Leone border crossing points as a conduit.

The Head of Intelligence of the LNP, Stephen H. Zargo admitted that Liberia had been a "trouble child" in the region but assured that that was a thing of the past. He said the "recycling of combatants in the Mano River basin" was bad for the development of the sub-region, urging that intelligence exchange and other collaborative measures to fight against organized crime were the only solutions to the crises that had hit the two countries.

Other members of the SLP delegation included the Assistant Commissioner for Personnel, Morie Lengor and Director of Training, Chief Superintendent Amadu Mannah. The UNAMSIL delegation included the CIVPOL Chief of Staff Edmore Veterai, Chief of Operations David Kiarie, Chief Training Adviser Sanjeev Raina and Chief Public Information Officer, Kemal Saiki.

The delegation also visited the UN-rehabilitated police station at Bushrod Island.

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