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PRESS RELEASE

**HIGH-LEVEL MEETING OF THE UNITED NATIONS
MISSIONS IN WEST AFRICA**

Freetown- A High-Level Meeting of the United Nations in West Africa was held on Friday 14 November, at UNAMSIL Headquarters, at the Mammy Yoko Hotel, in Freetown. The meeting, which brought together the Heads of the United Nations Peacekeeping and Political Missions in West Africa, follows a request by the UN Security that the missions in the region should develop an effective contingency plan for preventing cross-border movements of foreign combatants, as well as devise a mechanism for the harmonization of their activities in areas of mutual concern.

The High-Level meeting reviewed the general situation in West Africa as well as the specific conditions prevailing in the Côte d'Ivoire, Liberia, Sierra Leone and Guinea Bissau. In this regard, the Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General for West Africa, Mr. Ahmedou Ould-Abdallah reviewed the overall situation in the sub-region, while the respective SRSGs for the UN Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) and the UN Mission in Côte d'Ivoire (MINUCI), Mr. Jacques-Paul Klein and Mr. Albert Tévoédjré examined the situation pertaining to their relevant areas of operation. In a similar vein, the OIC-UNAMSIL Mr. Alan Doss spoke on the situation in Sierra Leone while the RSG for Guinea Bissau, Mr. David Stephen provided a brief on Guinea Bissau.

During their meeting, the Heads of the Mission held detailed discussions on cross-border movement of combatants, small arms and natural resources, and agreed to set up a mechanism to facilitate a free flow of information between Missions and, based on the capacity of the respective Missions, operational coordination (border patrols, screening of persons and goods) in cooperation with legitimate national security forces. Ways to promote harmonisation of the policies of host Governments and to involve civilian populations at the borders, will also be looked into.

***UNAMSIL Headquarters, Mammy Yoko, P. O. Box 5, Freetown, Sierra Leone
Tel: 232-22-295-000 Fax: 232-22-295-189***

MEDIA CONTACTS:

Chief PIS, Kemal Saiki, Tel. 232-22-295-583 mobile 076-692801 email: saiki@un.org

Editor: Rachel Eklou-Assogbavi, Tel. 232-22-295-814, mobile 076-627774 email: eklou-assogbavi@un.org

The Heads of Missions also agreed to maintain a regular mechanism of consultation between the Heads of Missions as well as Force Commanders. In this spirit, they exchanged information on cross-border use of UN assets in emergencies, the situation in Guinea and concerns about Côte d'Ivoire's territorial integrity.

The Heads of Mission also paid a courtesy call on President Kabbah and exchanged views on cross-border issues, particularly the revitalisation of the Mano River Union.

The Heads of Missions agreed to convene a follow-up meeting, which is scheduled to take place in February 2004 in Dakar, Senegal.

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