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PRESS RELEASE

DEPUTY SRSG AND NATIONAL ELECTORAL COMMISSION CHAIRMAN VISIT NOMINATION
CENTRES IN THE PROVINCES



Freetown – The Deputy Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General in Sierra Leone for Governance and Stabilization, Mr. Alan Doss and the Chairman of the National Electoral Commission (NEC), Mr. Eugene Davies today visited nomination centers in the eastern and northern provinces for the May 22 Local Government elections. In the eastern provincial headquarter town of Kenema, the delegation, which also included the UNAMSIL Electoral Adviser Adrian Morrice and the Deputy Commissioner of the UN Civilian Police (CIVPOL) Michael Holdsworth, observed at first hand, the nomination process at the Government Secondary School.

After a briefing by the Senior Elections Officer for the East, Jaya Samuka, the NEC Chairman said he was “happy at the smooth process” of the exercise and

hoped the trend would continue. “I hope independent candidates will not be intimidated. I hope they will be allowed to campaign and be accorded equal opportunities to demonstrate to their people what they stand for”, Mr. Davies went on. A point underscored by Mr. Doss who said that a free and fair nomination and eventual voting on May 22 would be a key indicator as to how far the peace in Sierra Leone had matured. He said that with the decentralization process authority would pass to the people. “Without a good and fair campaign that won’t happen” he said. The delegation also spoke to some of the candidates including a female Principal of the Ahmadiyya Secondary School at Blama, Ms Safula Moijueh who said she had been buoyed to contest because of the activity of the 50/50 female lobby group.

In the northern district of Port Loko, the District Returning Officer for NEC, Samuel Tingah Kargbo informed the delegation that a total of 60 candidates including 5 women were nominated yesterday by both the Sierra Leone People’s Party and the All People’s Congress (APC) party. He said the crowd was largely behaving themselves very well. However, a Member of Parliament for the APC party, Kemoh Sesay made a series of allegations about “the intimidation of APC candidates in the area”. He also said that some traditional chiefs had been overtly supporting candidates; something he said was contrary to the codes of conduct of the elections. A Member of Parliament for the SLPP, however, thought otherwise. Dr Wurie claimed that it was his party’s own supporters that were being intimidated by the APC but that he had been restraining them.

Following the allegations, Mr. Doss told a crowd of supporters that the UN was interested in seeing a fair and orderly election which “will allow you to take back the responsibility for your district”. The NEC Chairman, meanwhile, urged them to exercise restraint, saying “serious actions will be taken against any defaulters”. He called on Chiefs to steer clear of intimidation as that would be a breach of the codes of conduct.

Speaking to pressmen after the tour, Mr. Davies said he was “satisfied with the conduct of the nominations so far” saying that he believed the two places visited were a fair reflection of the exercise across the country. In both places, the nominations were accompanied by jubilant crowds of supporters singing and dancing a few meters away from the centers. The delegation will also visit nomination centers in the Western Area tomorrow.

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