



PRESS RELEASE

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UNAMSIL PUBLIC INFORMATION BEGINS NATIONWIDE SENSITIZATION ON DRAWDOWN

Freetown, Sierra Leone - The Public Information Section (PIS) of the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL) will today begin a three-month nationwide campaign to sensitize the people of Sierra Leone on the drawdown and eventual withdrawal of UN peacekeepers from the country scheduled for 2005.

Through performing artistes, the Community Liaison Unit of PIS will set off with a comedian group, The Young Professionals, for the southern province of the country. They will later go to the eastern and northern provinces where UNAMSIL has already handed over security primacy to the Government of Sierra Leone, but still maintains some troop presence there.

The performance is intended to allay the fears of the population about the peacekeepers' withdrawal, assuring that the Republic of Sierra Leone Armed Forces and the Sierra Leone Police are capable of maintaining peace in the country having undergone intensive trainings by both UNAMSIL's military and civilian police (CIVPOL) components.

In a country with a high rate of illiteracy, performing art has had a far-reaching impact in sensitizing the population. During the country's local government election and the presidential and legislative ones before it, PIS employed their services to voter-educate the people, something that had a serious positive impact as they went to areas where local FM radio stations could not.

The play entreats Sierra Leoneans to augment the efforts of the army and police by reporting any unusual occurrence to them, as well as admonishes the newly-elected local councillors to look after the interest of their people and to eschew corruption. Using the local lingua franca, Krio, the Young Professionals incorporate the dialect of all major ethnic groups in the country, interspersed with a good sense of humour that both entertains and educates.