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PRESS RELEASE

**SRSR AND NATIONAL ELECTORAL COMMISSION CHAIRMAN VISIT NOMINATION
CENTERS**



Freetown – The Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General in Sierra Leone, Ambassador Daudi Ngelautwa Mwakawago and the Chairman of the National Electoral Commission (NEC), Eugene Davies today visited the Western Area Rural and Urban Districts where they inspected nomination centers for candidates contesting the May Local Government elections.

In Waterloo in the Western Rural District, the NEC Returning Officer in the area, Mr. Jacob E.D Ade-Williams informed the delegation that at the close of the second day of the three-day exercise, the ruling Sierra Leone People's Party (SLPP) had fielded in 16 candidates for all 16 wards, while the main opposition All People's Congress had fielded in 15, while eight independent candidates had been nominated. He went on that the People's Democratic Party (PDP) had also fielded in one candidate, while a nominee of

the Peace and Liberation Party (PLP) was turned down because his documents were not in order. Mr. Ade-Williams was, however, quick to add that once the nominee sorted out the documents before the end of the exercise, his nomination would be upheld. He said candidates and their supporters were enthusiastic and orderly and that the Sierra Leone Police had ensured that the crowd had been kept at bay.

While thanking the conduct of the nomination process, Ambassador Mwakawago entreated candidates and supporters not to harass their opponents urging that "it is in your interest to have very peaceful elections. Every candidate must feel protected to participate freely without intimidation, which is part of the reconciliation and peace process". That was a point harped on by the NEC Chairman who said that any candidate involved in a breach of the codes of conduct of the elections, might well have their candidacy nullified.

At the Kissy nomination centre in the east end of Freetown, the Returning Officer for Western Area Urban, Clifford Roberts said 60 independent candidates (including seven women) and 70 party candidates among them 10 women, had been nominated at the end of the second day of the exercise yesterday. While the main political parties that have nominated are the Sierra Leone People's Party (SLPP) and the All People's Congress (APC) party, Mr. Roberts said that others like the People's Democratic Party (PDP), Grand Alliance Party (GAP) and the Peace and Liberation Party (PLP) had also fielded in candidates.

While the NEC Chairman renewed his appeal to all to provide a level playing field for all, the NEC Western Area Commissioner, Frederick Bright assured "a free, fair and transparent election". He thanked UNAMSIL for providing "invaluable assistance" to NEC, a point underscored by the NEC Chairman who told a post-tour press conference at the UNAMSIL headquarters that the support provided by UNAMSIL "is unimaginable and we cannot explain it". Mr. Davies, however, expressed the worry at what would happen when UNAMSIL left the country and elections came up. He said the Mission had put hundreds of vehicles at the disposal of his commission which he said had only nine vehicles in working order. Mr. Davies assured that the commission would "continue to work in the interest of the people of Sierra Leone", adding "we are quite determined to do things the right way."

Ambassador Mwakawago told the press that the two main political parties had "lived up to expectations" as there had been no fracas in the areas visited. He said he had "no doubt that the elections will be successful". The SRSR urged that "it is absolutely vital that these elections should be given the opportunity to be local. Power is going to the people. We want the people to exercise their rights and not for them to be manipulated." He said Sierra Leone had suffered too much from a brutal civil war and political mismanagement that its people deserved better. "Sierra Leone needs help", he went on, advising that the country would not get that help "if things are not done properly".

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