



PRESS RELEASE

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UNAMSIL PUBLIC INFORMATION ENDS 2-DAY MEDIA TOUR

Freetown, Sierra Leone – The Public Information Section (PIS) of the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL) on Thursday ended a 2-day tour of the eastern provincial headquarters town of Kenema and the southern provincial town of Bo that was organized for senior national and international journalists in the country.

In Kenema, the journalists witnessed, first hand, the ongoing sensitization campaign by UNAMSIL to allay fears reportedly expressed recently by some residents of the town over the drawdown of UN peacekeepers.

During a briefing at the headquarters of the ninth Pakistani battalion (PAKBATT 9) in Kenema, Assistant Operations Officer, Captain Ameer Nawaz, said while community and humanitarian assistance would decline in line with the number of troops available, UNAMSIL would direct its efforts to supporting local governments in those areas that had been vacated by its military force.

The journalists also met the Provincial Secretary, East, Lansana Brima Koroma who briefed them about the work of the peacekeepers in helping not only with security, but also by rendering humanitarian assistance with services such as medical care, road rehabilitation and the provision of school and local court buildings.

On the issue of the situation in Yenga, the disputed border town with Guinea, Mr Koroma said that was being resolved by the two Governments.

In Bo, the journalists met the newly-elected Chairmen of the Bo, Makeni and Koidu New Sembahun Town Councils who told them they were preparing for the eventual withdrawal of UN peacekeepers. They expressed satisfaction at strides being made by the Government of Sierra Leone in building capacities of both the Sierra Leone Police (SLP) and Republic of Sierra Leone Armed Forces (RSLAF).

However, Mrs. Mary Musa of the Koidu New Sembahun Town Council expressed concerns at the peacekeepers' pending withdrawal citing the lack of logistics by the RSLAF and of police presence in many of the chiefdoms in Kono district and the takeover of humanitarian assistance currently being undertaken by these peacekeepers. On the issue of the district's porous border with Guinea, she stressed that there was no presence of customs officers or regulations on this side.

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