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PRESS RELEASE

SRSG UNAMSIL PARTICIPATES IN THE 6th PARTNERSHIP MEETING



Freetown- The Special Representative of the Secretary-General (SRSG), the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL), Ambassador Daudi Mwakawago, joined the Vice-President, Honorable Solomon Berewa and his two co-chairs, Mr. Mats Karlsson, World Bank Country Director and Mr. Alan Doss in his capacity as UNDP Resident Representative at the 6th meeting of

the bi-monthly Sierra Leone Development Partnership Committee (DEPAC), which this time, in addition to progress made towards the finalization of the poverty reduction strategy (PRSP), focused on health, water and sanitation and road infrastructure, which are as Mr. Doss stated “sectors that matter most for the people of Sierra Leone”.

The meeting, which took place on 22-23 January, was attended by numerous Ministers or their representatives, from the Health, Works, Education, Defence, Information, Foreign Affairs, Development, Finance, Internal Affairs, Tourism, Transport and Communications ministries, the Attorney-General, the NACSA Commissioner as well as representatives from the Bank of Sierra Leone, the National Revenue Authority (NRS), Sierra Leone Roads Authority (SLRA), Sierra Leone Water Company (SALWACO) and Statistics Sierra Leone (SSL). Partners included the European Union, the African Development Bank, the World Bank, the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), DFID, United States, Switzerland, Germany, China, the UN country team and NGO representatives.

In his introductory remarks, the Vice-President said that progress had been made towards achieving the recovery targets in 2003 and that “out of the 32 benchmarks agreed at the Consultative Group, 9 were already achieved”. He thanked partners for their support and stated that he “looked forward to their continued cooperation and support in 2004 - an important year for the continued consolidation of peace, transition from recovery to development and the process

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of decentralization”. Although extensive progress has been made, Mr. Doss stressed that “there is no time for complacency”.

The SRSB, who attended the meeting for the first time, briefed on the next steps of the UNAMSIL drawdown. In reference to the recent UN Security Council discussions, he indicated that “the Security Council is keen to ensure that there is a soft departure of UNAMSIL and no abrupt breaks with Sierra Leone” and that “an assessment mission will be coming to Freetown in order to see, after consultations with stakeholders, how the drawdown can be calibrated”.

After an overview of the health sector by the Minister of Health, Dr. Agnes Taylor-Lewis, partners acknowledged that progress had been made in the area of reconstruction, but that equipment and staffing remain the main challenges. The US Ambassador, Mr. Cheavass stressed that “the country is vulnerable to the increase of HIV/AIDS” and called for “the Government, NGOs, CSO and donors to aggressively tackling this challenge”.

In his presentation on existing strategies, policies and priorities in the water and sanitation sector, the Deputy Director-General of the Sierra Leone Water Company (SALWACO), Mr. Francis Morjue indicated that “the WATSAN coverage had increased since the end of the conflict, but that coverage remains very low”. It was agreed that in order to build on current achievements, there is a need for an effective WATSAN policy that addresses coordination as well as institutional arrangements.

On road infrastructure, considered by the Vice-President “as one of the most important areas for economic development”, the Minister of Works, Dr. J. C Boima thanked donors for their support and welcome further contributions to address both feeder roads and to pave some of the arterial and major trunk roads.

In terms of next steps towards the completion of the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP), the meeting agreed to revise the PRSP process on quality, direction and timing and concluded that a final draft PRSP should be ready by July 2004.

The Vice-President thanked partners for a productive meeting and welcome them back again for the next DEPAC, scheduled for 11-12 March, which will, among others discuss: public finance management, micro-finance, private sector development, privatization and the PRSP.

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