



PRESS RELEASE

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UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Arrives Sierra Leone for a 3 Day Visit

Freetown Sierra Leone - The United Nations High commissioner for Human Rights, Madam Justice Louise Arbour arrived in Sierra Leone today (Wednesday 13 July). She was received at the UNAMSIL Helipad on behalf of the Special Representative of the Secretary General for Sierra Leone, Ambassador Daudi Mwakawago by senior staff of the Mission.

Justice Arbour stated that her visit to the sub region was for her and her colleagues to look at the human rights situation in the various countries of the sub-region particularly Liberia, Cote d'Ivoires and Sierra Leone.

She stressed that she was looking forward to hearing from the experience of colleagues in the mission how the future holds for the people of Sierra Leone and how in particular the Human Rights component of the Mission can continue to support the efforts of the people.

Asked what her expectations for Sierra Leone were, the Human Rights Commissioner commended the immense progress made so far on human rights issues adding that, Sierra Leone no doubt serves in many ways as a model for the initiatives in transitional justice as represented by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) and the Special Court. She said she was looking forward to hearing in more details about the contribution those two institutions had made.

Justice Arbour stated however that at the end of the day, nothing was a substitute for good governance and for the responsibility of leaders to view power as a series of obligations and responsibilities and not just as a set of personal rewards.

Earlier in a welcome statement read by Ms Sheila Dallas, the SRSG, Ambassador Mwakawago, told the visiting Human Rights Commissioner that UNAMSIL has transferred the highest standards to the people in its capacity building efforts. He said the Mission valued her interest in Sierra Leone especially at a time when the mission is preparing for its final departure as a peacekeeping operation. He reassured Mrs. Arbour that the people of Sierra Leone are zealous to get out of the quagmire of poverty caused by bad governance and the war.

Mrs. Arbour will later today meet with representatives of Economic Community of West Africa (ECOWAS), former Chairman of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission and members of the civil society and NGOs. Tomorrow the Human Rights Commissioner is scheduled to meet the Sierra Leone president, Alhaji Dr. Ahmad Tejan Kabbah