



PRESS RELEASE

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UNAMSIL GIVES HOPE TO ONE MORE COMMUNITY WITH THE REHABILITATION OF A MAGISTRATE COURT

Freetown, Sierra Leone, 20 July 2005 -- More than 200 hundred people braved heavy rain Tuesday to attend the commissioning of the newly renovated and refurbished Waterloo Magistrates Court by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General of the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL), Ambassador Daudi Ngalautwa Mwakawago.

The rehabilitation of the building was undertaken by UNAMSIL's Pakistani Engineers. The building had been in a dilapidated condition since rebels burnt it during the war and its rehabilitation is a demonstration of the mission's role to sustain and consolidate the peace that it has helped restore in the country.

Commissioning the court, Ambassador Mwakawago described the project as a beacon for the enhancement of the rule of law and dispensation of justice within the beneficiary communities.

The project was implemented under Quick Impact Project of UNAMSIL's Trust Fund,

The Special Representative of the Secretary-General expressed concern about the delay in court proceedings in the country, adding, "Justice delayed is justice denied" and urged the judiciary to conduct speedy trials to prevent overcrowding in cells and unwarranted adjournments.

Ambassador Mwakawago reiterated that the report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission found that the war was as a result of bad governance, endemic corruption and denial of basic human rights. Time was ripe he said, for the judiciary to dispense justice in the interests of everybody, poor or rich by recognizing their fundamental human rights as stipulated in the constitution of Sierra Leone and as a way of addressing some of the causes of the war.

He assured those present that the UN will continue to assist Sierra Leone in the consolidation of peace even after UNAMSIL pulls out of the country.

Speaking on behalf of the Attorney General and Minister of Justice, the Director of Public Prosecution, Oladipo Robin Mason commended UNAMSIL for refurbishing the court and pledged that dispensation of justice will be guaranteed.

The Chairman of the Western Area District Council, Allie Badara Mansaray, speaking on behalf of the beneficiaries said the rehabilitation of the court will go a long way to dispense justice speedily, and prevent its people from using lots of resources to attend court in Freetown, the capital.

He gave a background of the court which was burnt during the war as having been established in 1819 for the trial of ex-combatants after the Napoleonic war in England.

The rehabilitated court has a Chambers for Magistrates, Jury, and Prosecutor.

Present at the ceremony were the Force Commander of UNAMSIL Major General Sajjad Akram, the Mayor of Freetown, Winstanley R. Bankole Johnson, Acting Chief Justice, Virginia Wright, and UNAMSIL officials.