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PRESS RELEASE

SRSR DECORATES UNAMSIL CIVPOL OFFICERS AS DSRSG HANDS OVER REFURBISHED STRUCTURES TO SLP TRAINING SCHOOL



Freetown – The Special Representative of the Secretary-General (SRSR) and head of the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL), Ambassador Daudi Ngelautwa Mwakawago, accompanied by his Deputy, Mr Alan Doss and UNAMSIL’s Director of Administration, Steinar B. Bjornsson on Thursday 26 February decorated 38 UNAMSIL Civilian Police (CivPol) officers with United Nations Peace Medals at a colourful ceremony at the Sierra Leone Police Training School at Hastings, outside Freetown.

Addressing the officers who come from 25 different countries, Ambassador Mwakawago said the medals, which are awarded to peacekeepers and CIVPOL officials who

complete a minimum of 90 days unblemished, was in appreciation of their “professionalism, sacrifice and devotion towards the restoration of law and order and the consolidation of lasting peace in Sierra Leone”. He said 35 CivPol officers had been assisting in training the Sierra Leone Police (SLP) while 79 others deployed throughout the country had been mentoring SLP officers “who in turn have enhanced the spread of Government authority throughout the country; and also in maintaining law and order”. 17 other CivPol officers, he went on, based at the Mission’s headquarters in Freetown, had been supporting the SLP in a variety of tasks including cross-border and airport policing.

The SRSR thanked development partners including the Commonwealth for its Community Safety and Security Project (CCSSP), the British Department for International Development (DfID) and the United Nations Development Programme “whose assistance to CivPol has afforded it to play catalytic role in helping the SLP build up itself”.



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Ambassador Mwakawago informed members of the SLP about UNAMSIL's drawdown plan saying it was being pursued "in a manner whereby you, the Sierra Leone Police, and the Republic of Sierra Leone Armed Forces gradually take over security responsibilities from UNAMSIL troops leaving any security vacuum." He urged them, especially their commanders, to realize that the security of Sierra Leone rested in their hands, adding that while they would be in "the driver's seat, UNAMSIL CivPol will be by your side until the target of 9,500 personnel [for the SLP] is achieved" and entreated them to "double your smartness and resourcefulness."

"I need hardly emphasize that you need to work closely with your people" the SRSG went on, adding that "Any bad elements amidst the police must be weeded out so that the confidence of the people is not shaken. The people's confidence and cooperation are vital for any good police force".

After decorating the CivPol officers, the SRSG and his deputy, Mr Alan Doss proceeded to hand over newly constructed and furnished additional classrooms and dormitory for the Hastings Police Training School funded by the UN Development Programme (UNDP).

Speaking at the dedication ceremony, Mr Doss, who is also the UNDP Country Representative said he was "particularly pleased that this occasion is graced by the presence of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Sierra Leone, Ambassador Daudi Mwakawago, who since his arrival as head of UNAMSIL has given unreserved support and leadership in galvanizing United Nations' assistance to Sierra Leone including in the strengthening of the capacity of the Sierra Leone Police." These efforts, he went on, had received great support from UNAMSIL, the Commonwealth, and DfID, which is financing a major expansion of the Training School.

The DSRSG said the project had been implemented as part of a much larger international effort to strengthen the capacity and professionalism of the Sierra Leone Police. "A well-trained and equipped professional police force - dedicated to serving the population in the maintenance of the rule of law and citizens' security - is one of the fundamental pillars of good governance." Mr Doss added "the role of police in Sierra Leone is critical as the country grapples with the challenge of addressing the legacy of the conflict and consolidating peace." He said that with UNAMSIL's drawdown underway, the role of the SLP is becoming ever more important. "We are confident that this training school and the newly constructed facilities will contribute to achieving the target of increasing the number and quality of the Sierra Leone police force to meet these challenges," He thanked the other partners including the Deputy Inspector General of the SLP Oliver Somassa and the National Commission for Social Action (NaCSA). The Ghanaian High Commissioner to Sierra Leone, Kabral Blay-Amihere also attended the occasion.
