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UN ENVOY ADVOCATES DIALOGUE AS A POLITICAL INSTRUMENT

Freetown, Sierra Leone, 24 November 2005--- Declaring open the second round of inter-party dialogue organized by the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL) today, the Special representative of the secretary General (SRSR) for Sierra Leone, Ambassador Daudi Mwakawago, stressed that the wind of change is blowing across Africa and it was therefore imperative for political parties to distinguish between national interest and partisan politics to enable them work collectively in order to foster unity and development.

Ambassador Daudi Mwakawago informed representatives of the ruling Sierra Leone Peoples Party (SLPP), the main opposition All Peoples' Congress (APC) party, and Peoples Liberation Party (PLP) present at the gathering that if Africa must emerge from the quagmire of poverty, under-development and HIV/AIDS, leadership of political parties, however strong or weak need to make a strong commitment to peaceful dialogue and shun violence, adding that Africa has lost out on development because a number of political leaders who are bankrupt of ideas and strategies have resorted to wanton violence as a short cut.

The SRSR told the political leaders to cultivate the culture of dialogue and peaceful resolution of differences and wherever violence raises its ugly head, the first condemnation should come from them.

Ambassador Mwakawago also took the opportunity to thank the political leaders and the entire people of Sierra Leone for the support and cooperation they gave to UNAMSIL during its operational tenure in the country.

In response, the political parties pledged to work together in the interest of Sierra Leone and collectively agreed to constitute an eleven person working group which will propose a viable mechanism for inter-party dialogue. The first meeting is to be held at Parliament in December this year. They also expressed their determination to do everything possible in order to consolidate the peace UNAMSIL and other international partners have helped to restore in Sierra Leone after 11 years of conflict.

Present at the session were Senior Officials in UNAMSIL. Hon. Mohamed Idriss represented PLP, while the Secretary General Jacob Saffa, Publicity Secretary, Hon. Victor Reider, Head of Women's Wing, Hon. Dr. Bernadette Lahai, and Young Generation Leader, Sahr Nyama, represented the SLPP. The APC was represented by the Secretary General, Victor Foh, Publicity Secretary, William J. Smith, former Secretary General Osman Yassaneh, Mrs.,

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Rosaline Forde, Hon. Philipson Kamara and Harold Hanciles.

It can be recalled that the first inter-party dialogue was hosted by the Special Representative of the Secretary- General (SRSG) of UNAMSIL, at UNAMSIL headquarter, Mammy Yoko Hotel, on 20 September this year with members representing three registered political parties. The aim of the dialogue is to bring together all registered political parties to map out tangible strategies and mechanisms that will consolidate and enhance sustainable peace in the country.