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Liberia's Ministry of Health and Social Welfare holds joint consultative meeting with County Superintendents and County Health Officials; DSRSG Ryan pledges UN support

Monrovia, Liberia – In line with the United Nations Mission in Liberia's (UNMIL) commitment to support the restoration of state authority at the decentralized level, the Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Recovery and Governance, Mr. Jordan Ryan, today attended the opening ceremony of a two-day national consultation meeting held by the Ministry of Health and Social Welfare with the County Superintendents and the County health officials in Liberia.



County Superintendents and County Health officials attend joint consultative meetings

Participants will discuss the need to create a functional, decentralized health system in Liberia, specifically looking at ways to develop a framework for collaboration between county health officials and the superintendents leading the county administrations.

Addressing county superintendents and county health officials during the opening ceremony at St. Theresa's Convent in Monrovia, the Minister of Health and Social Welfare, Dr. Walter T. Gwenigale, stressed the importance of ensuring that each Liberian receives the health care needed, but more importantly, "to secure health for the people at the price they can afford," he said.

"This initiative, however, can only happen with the assistance of those closest to the people," said Minister Gwenigale, imploring superintendents and health officers to take the lead in the counties. "Your participation, your ownership and your leadership is the key," he added, promising that the Ministry would endeavour to provide the financial and technical resources to ensure that the health needs at the county level are met.

DSRSG Ryan congratulated the Minister of Health and Social Welfare for convening the meeting and for placing emphasis on the needs and priorities of the counties. "The UN is proud of being associated with this important initiative which will ensure that colleagues at the county and district levels are empowered to bring about a new health care system for all Liberians," he said. Mr. Ryan also reaffirmed the commitment that the UN has to support decentralized government in Liberia through the recently-signed, joint UN project of County Support Teams (CSTs). He also applauded the support provided by UNICEF and WHO for this meeting and for the restoration of health at the community level.

Maternal health, child mortality, malaria, HIV/AIDS and malnutrition were among the key problems the United Nations identified earlier this year as in its Common Country Assessment (CCA) for Liberia. "A country cannot prosper if the health care system is faltering," Mr. Ryan said. He urged all county officials to work hand-in-hand with the Ministry of Health and Social Welfare and pledged the support of the UN and international partners to build a strong, sustainable and accessible national health system.

Through a combination of presentations, discussions and group activities, the two-day joint consultative meeting is intended to provide a platform for forging inclusiveness and participatory management of the health system in all counties. The long-term focus is on sustained partnerships between the county health teams and the county authorities in the revival, promotion and development of the health care delivery system in post-conflict Liberia. Other guests and speakers at the ceremony included government officials and representatives from UNICEF, the European Union, USAID, and WHO.

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