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Deputy Special Representative stresses that rule of law must be maintained to ensure changes benefit communities on the Guthrie Rubber Plantation

Monrovia, Liberia – As part of UNMIL’s overall efforts to support the Government of Liberia to assume full control over its natural resources, the Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Operations and Rule of Law, Mr. Luiz Carlos da Costa, together with other UNMIL senior officials on 30 September conducted an assessment visit to the Guthrie Rubber Plantation. The delegation’s visit was aimed at reviewing the implementation of the procedures put in place by the Rubber Plantations Task Force, following the government’s repossession of the plantation in mid-August 2006.



DSRSG da Costa and RRR Director Tamagnini listen to concerns by members of the community

At the plantation, the delegation was briefed by UNMIL Military, UN Police (UNPOL) and the Liberia National Police (LNP) about security aspects; and by the Interim Management Team (IMT) on the present plan for technical development and employment creation at the plantation.

Mr. da Costa noted the joint efforts made by the newly-established IMT and UNMIL to ensure the proper implementation of the new procedures at the plantation. He further stated, “There are a number of adjustments that are required and these are currently being discussed and will be implemented in the coming days.”

The Deputy SRSG also stressed the importance of observing the rule of law, “We would like to see only authorized tapping taking place and all illegal tapping coming to an end. Those caught will be subject to the consequences of the law,” said Mr. da Costa.



Guthrie rubber plantation employee demonstrates proper rubber tapping technique

Speaking to UNMIL Radio on the progress made since the repossession of the plantation, Mr. da Costa recognized that much still needs to be done and added, “This is a hopeful development which will benefit the community as a whole. There will be new opportunities for employment, training and overall economic revitalization. Already more than 1,000 people are employed at the plantation.”

During the visit, the delegation spoke with the members of the community living on the plantation and listened to their concerns. The team also toured the newly-established checkpoints and the camp constructed by the UNMIL Pakistani engineers which consists of office space for the National Commission

for Disarmament, Demobilisation, Rehabilitation, and Reintegration (NCDDRR) and the IMT, a LNP station with a temporary holding cell and a military base for patrolling activities. The delegation also toured a school being renovated by the UNMIL Quick Impact Project that will benefit more than 600 children in the community.
