



Press release, 02 November 2006

UNMIL/PIO/PR/130

UN Envoy inspects key road project in Northern Liberia

Voinjama, Lofa County, Liberia -- An important road project in northern Liberia's Lofa County, that has already created more than 500 jobs, will revive economic activity in the area and also serve as a model for similar projects across Liberia. This assessment was made by the Special Representative of the Secretary General in Liberia, Mr. Alan Doss, when he visited Voinjama to inspect progress being made on the rehabilitation of the Voinjama-Zorzor road, being re-built by UNMIL's Pakistani engineering unit, with funding and support from the World Bank and the UN Development Programme.



UNMIL Pakistani engineers at work on the Voinjama-Zorzor road

"This is very important for the people of Lofa because it will help to open up markets and trade as well as provide employment but the communities must help to maintain this road, especially during the rainy season. No road lasts unless it is well maintained," Mr. Doss stressed. The 95-kilometre road rehabilitation project is just one of several joint UN implementation projects in Lofa County, involving UNDP, the World Bank, and UNMIL, in close collaboration with Liberia's Ministry of Public Works.



SRSR Doss inspects the road work near Voinjama

It is expected that such labour-intensive rehabilitation work on the road network in Lofa County will result in the revitalization of small communities through the creation of jobs for more than 1,000 skilled and unskilled workers from the area. So far, during the first phase of the project, more than 500 workers have been recruited by UNDP for side brushing and for preparing the road for heavy-duty work in its second stage. Other workers have been employed to produce crushed stone for road foundations.

"Roads provide jobs and security. This is why President Johnson Sirleaf has listed road improvement at the top of her 'dry-season deliverables,'" Mr. Doss added. "We have the human resources; the equipment and now we also

have the funding and the partners. So, we can make a difference before the end of the dry season," he emphasized.

The World Bank has contributed US\$600,000 towards the project and the Bank's official responsible for infrastructure in Liberia, Paul Kriss, accompanying the UN Envoy, said the success of the Voinjama-Zorzor project could be replicated through a similar collaboration for the re-construction of other roads. He praised the Pakistani UNMIL military engineers as well as the county authorities and called on everyone to continue with their hard work.

The UNDP Country Director, Steven Ursino, who also accompanied the SRSR, said the partnership between UNMIL, UNDP, the World Bank and Public Works, is a good example of collaboration that will benefit Liberia. "We need to draw the lessons from this partnership because there are many other roads that have to be rebuilt and this could serve as an example" he said.

In addition to the creation of jobs and the economic revitalization of the area the initiative also forms part of UNMIL's programme for the re-integration of former fighters and returnees in the County.

Mr. Dawelson Hinnah, resident engineer of Liberia's Ministry of Public Works in Voinjama, speaking on behalf of the Lofa County Superintendent Kortimai, said the joint project was having an important impact on the county, and he thanked UNMIL, the World Bank and UNDP for coming to help the people of Lofa. "For the past two years this road has been impassable during the rain season, which has led to a dramatic increase in the price of basic commodities like rice," he said. Now, with the people of Lofa County enjoying their first major post-war rice harvest expectations are being raised that the county could soon regain its pre-war status as the bread-basket of Liberia, especially with the reconstruction of the road network that links the county with the rest of the country.

Other members of the delegation were the Director of the Africa Division of the UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO) Dmitry Titov and the Head of UNMIL's RRR Section, Andrea Tamagnini.
