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Disciplined and accountable police critical for rebuilding Liberia, UN Deputy Envoy says

Monrovia, Liberia – The Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Operations and Rule of Law, Mr. Luiz Carlos da Costa, has said that a professional, accountable, and disciplined police force is an indispensable instrument of a democratic society, especially for a country recovering from protracted war. Mr. da Costa was speaking at a ceremony to award UN peacekeeping medals to Rwandan Police Officers serving with the UN Mission in Liberia, (UNMIL.)



DSRSG da Costa decorates Contingent Commander Karera

“Lessons from the recent history of Rwanda and other conflict areas, including Liberia, teach us how things can go horribly wrong when there is a breakdown in the rule of law,” Mr. da Costa stated. “We hold the firm belief that a professional, accountable, and disciplined police force is essential.”



Rwandan Police Officers on parade

The Deputy UN Envoy said that “It is heartening for all of us to see today, the important contribution that Rwanda is making in support of global peace, particularly in Liberia, given its own experience of internal conflict.” The group of 15 officers in Liberia is the first batch of Rwandan police officers to be deployed on UN peacekeeping duties. Rwanda is also currently contributing police officers in UN service in Cote d’Ivoire and over 2,000 soldiers to the African Union mission in Darfur, Sudan.

Addressing the police officers, Mr. da Costa said, “You have been playing a key role in attaining the Mission’s mandate of establishing the rule of law across all of Liberia.” “Your valuable service in training, advising and mentoring your fellow officers from the Liberia National Police (LNP), is very much appreciated,” he added. “The skills and knowledge that you pass on to your Liberian counterparts will go a long way in helping Liberia consolidate peace and security, and enhance its democratic functioning.”

The Deputy UN Envoy said that the LNP cannot win the battle against crime and maintain law and order, alone, or in isolation, “They need the support and assistance of each and every member of the Liberian society. I urge all Liberians to take pride in their new policewomen and policemen, and show due respect to the police.” And he cautioned members of the LNP to “put their best professional behaviour forward, and truly earn the trust of the people. I also urge communities and community leaders to view the police as close partners in the task of making Liberia safe and secure.”

The Rwandan Police Officers are deployed in three of Liberia’s fifteen counties (Montserrado, Bong and Grand Gedeh) and they provide support for the restructuring of the LNP. The contingent commander, Dennis Karera, said his country’s contribution to Liberia stems, in part, from Rwanda’s own experience from the 1994 genocide, ‘The bitter lessons learnt from that experience made Rwanda to decide to render support to all peace efforts worldwide in preventing human suffering, loss of lives and search for peace.’”

Mr. da Costa commended the Contingent Commander Mr. Karera and members of the Rwandan police contingent in UNMIL for their commitment and contribution to the cause of peace in Liberia. He also used the occasion to urge all UN peacekeepers in Liberia to respect the Secretary-General’s policy of zero tolerance of sexual exploitation and abuse.
