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**Joint Government of Liberia – United Nations Rubber Plantations Task Force
submits mid-term report**

Monrovia, Liberia - The Joint Government of Liberia – United Nations Rubber Plantation Task Force, at a press briefing held at the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) Headquarters, today announced that it has submitted a mid-term report to President Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf based on the findings of its sub-committees on security, legal and management, political, and human rights and livelihood.

“The process marks the commitment by the Government of Liberia to regain full and firm control over the country and its resources, including the process of reverting the past culture of corrupt practices,” said Mr. James Logan, Acting Minister of Agriculture.

The mid-term report highlights the need to develop a livelihood package for the ex-combatants currently occupying the plantations, in particular the Sinoe and Guthrie plantations, and to design appropriate measures to improve security at the plantations. The report also indicates that the Task Force has not yet received sufficient evidence that the plantation management companies are meeting their fiscal obligations towards the government.

In addition, the Task Force has initiated a legal review of existing concessions and management agreements and contracts for the plantations, including questions of ownership and management responsibilities. The full range of legal issues pertaining to the plantations will be completed with the Ministry of Justice.

Speaking at the press briefing, Mr. Andrea Tamagnini, Director of Rehabilitation, Reintegration and Recovery and acting as UNMIL representative for the Task Force, expressed his appreciation for the commitment of the Liberian Government and the UN staff in carrying out the work of the Task Force. “The work of the Rubber Plantations Task Force represents an invaluable joint opportunity for the Government and the international community to engage in supporting the development of local communities and improving the living conditions of people at the plantations,” Mr. Tamagnini said.

The Joint Government of Liberia – United Nations Rubber Plantations Task Force was established in February 2006 to address ongoing tensions and significant losses of government revenue due to inefficient management of publicly owned plantations. Its work was officially launched on 1 March 2006 by the Minister of Agriculture as Chairman of the Task Force, Dr. Chris Toe, together with the Deputy-Special Representative for Recovery and Governance, Mr. Jordan Ryan, the Minister for Internal Affairs, Mr. Ambulai Johnson, Deputy Minister of Labour, Mr. John Josiah, the Solicitor-General, Mr. Tiawon Gongloe, and the NCDDRR Executive Director, Mr. Moses Jarbo. A final report will be submitted to the Liberian President and the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Alan Doss, on 8 May.

Last month, the Task Force conducted comprehensive assessment visits to the Cavalla, Sinoe, Cocopa, Guthrie, Firestone, LAC and Salala rubber plantations particularly to look at the work practices and the workers’ living and working conditions within the plantations.
