



UNMIL/PIO/PR/72

Press release, 05 June 2006

UN Envoy urges Liberia's traditional leaders to continue playing an active role in the country's recovery and development

Gbarnga, Liberia – Traditional leaders from all of Liberia's 15 counties met last weekend in Gbarnga, Bong County, to elect the new leadership of the National Traditional Council of Liberia. The three-day meeting ended with a colourful swearing-in ceremony attended by the President of Liberia, H. E. Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf and the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Alan Doss. Present also at the ceremony, which was presided by the Minister of Internal Affairs, Mr. A. B. Johnson, were the Speaker and members of the House of Representatives, the Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary-General and UNDP Representative, Mr. Jordan Ryan, the Bong County Legislative Caucus and the Bong County Superintendent.



The newly-elected office bearers of the Traditional Council awaiting certification

Certificating the newly-elected office bearers of the Traditional Council, President Johnson-Sirleaf urged the leaders to bring back the culture of peaceful co-existence that prevailed in Liberia before the conflict. "Let us work together to change the bad things of the past and create a new Liberia, a better Liberia for all the citizens," she said, recalling how the civil war, violence and corruption had ruined the country.

Highlighting the pivotal role played by the traditional leaders in shaping the country's recovery and development, Special Representative Doss said: "You are the repository of traditional knowledge and culture. You know your people the best and Liberians turn to you for guidance, especially during times of strife." Recognizing the workshop as a landmark in the process of national redemption and renewal, SRSG Doss encouraged the traditional leaders, under the overall leadership of President Johnson-Sirleaf's government, to actively participate in the country's reconstruction. "Without reconstruction, there is no lasting peace. Without lasting peace, there is no prosperity."

During the three-day workshop, the traditional leaders discussed their role in the government's strategy to mobilize the participation of rural communities in decision-making processes. Their role in unifying the nation, restoring the lost cultural heritage and realizing the government's new vision for Liberia was also discussed.

The workshop, organized under the auspices of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, was sponsored by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) as part of its efforts to support good governance and capacity building at community level.
