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Government of Liberia restores state authority at Guthrie rubber plantation; UNMIL to support efforts to ensure law and order at the plantation

Monrovia, Liberia – The Government of Liberia, in a move to restore state authority and the rule of law on rubber plantations that have been illegally occupied, yesterday formally re-possessed the Guthrie Rubber Plantation. This was marked by a ceremony attended by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Alan Doss, the Minister of Agriculture and Chairman of the Joint government of Liberia – United Nations Rubber Plantation Task Force, Dr. Chris Toe, the Inspector General of the Liberia National Police (LNP), Beatrice Munah Sieh, the Deputy Executive Director of the NCDDRR, Ruth Witherspoon, and local representatives together with the UNMIL Force Commander, UN Police Commissioner and other senior UNMIL officials.



Namibian peacekeeper provides security at Guthrie Rubber Plantation

During his keynote address, Dr. Chris Toe said “today, we are taking a major step on Liberia’s path towards national recovery, development and respect of rule of law. The restoration of state authority on Guthrie marks significant progress Liberians have made in terms of building sustainable peace and addressing irregularities that have persisted from the time of our conflict.”

Speaking to the local authorities, Special Representative Doss thanked the members of the Rubber Plantation Task Force and all those involved, including the communities, for their joint efforts in making this day possible and noted that “this did not happen by chance; it was a result of a lot of hard work. This cooperation demonstrates what we can achieve when we work together.” Referring to this historic day, Mr. Doss said “Today, the Government of Liberia is taking back what belongs to Liberia.”

The Special Representative assured of UNMIL’s support to the LNP in ensuring that law and order was maintained on the plantation. “We have to make sure that the plantations remain safe so we can begin the task of rebuilding the plantations, including allowing for investments and aid to come in.” The SRSG also urged the community dwellers to avoid violence and work with the Government. “Help us to rebuild the community and together we will make sure that this plantation will generate jobs for you and your children,” he said.

The Joint Government of Liberia – United Nations Rubber Plantation 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. In order to enforce the rule of law within the plantation, the LNP has deployed officers to the plantation and, with the support of the United Nations Police (UNPOL), has been undertaking regular patrols. The UNMIL Pakistani military engineers have constructed housing and office space within Guthrie.

In addition, an interim management team was also established by the Government of Liberia and the Rubber Planters’ Association of Liberia (RPAL) as a temporary mechanism to regularize employment, promote labour standards and rehabilitate facilities, until a long-term management structure is established in accordance with the relevant rules and regulations of the country. Possibilities for reintegration assistance for the ex-combatants are also being explored by the NCDDRR with the support of UNMIL and other stakeholders.

At the end of the ceremony, SRSG Doss handed over a set of keys to the LNP Inspector General for a car to be used by the LNP detachments in order to strengthen their capacity in maintaining law and order in the Guthrie Rubber Plantation.