

UNITED NATIONS



NATIONS UNIES

UNITED NATIONS MISSION IN SIERRA LEONE
(UNAMSIL)

PRESS RELEASE

3 July 2002

SPECIAL REPRESENTATIVE VISITS KAILAHUN DISTRICT

Freetown – The Special Representative of the Secretary-General (SRSG) in Sierra Leone, Ambassador Oluyemi Adeniji, accompanied by the Force Commander of the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL), Lt. Gen. Daniel I. Opande, and other senior UNAMSIL officials, yesterday visited the eastern district of Kailahun to assess the influx of refugees and returnees and the security situation in the area.

In his briefing to the SRSG and his entourage, the Pakistani Battalion (PAKBATT) 3 Commanding Officer, Lt. Col. Ahmad Nawaz, noted that the security situation in his area was calm. He indicated that over 14,000 Sierra Leonean returnees and about 6,600 Liberian refugees have crossed over from Liberia into the area over the past month.

Lt. Col. Nawaz also stressed the acute shortage of infrastructure and other amenities in Kailahun and its environs with consequent effects on the resettled and returning citizens. The commanding officer said that PAKBATT 3 has been winning the hearts and minds of the people with free medical camps, blood donations, provision of safe drinking water at designated points in the town, sporting activities, refurbishment of schools, rehabilitation of roads and donation of garments and other humanitarian items.

Ambassador Adeniji and his team later met with the representatives of district authorities, the Sierra Leone Police, the Republic of Sierra Leone Armed Forces, traditional leaders, and members of the civil society at the PAKBATT 3 Headquarters. During the meeting, Mr. Sulaiman Senge Koroma, the District Officer, said district administration has resumed with most of the functionaries now in place. He, however, lamented that hospitals, schools and the local prison were not functioning well due to lack of facilities. He commended the close cooperation and support of UNAMSIL's Civil Affairs Section since he arrived in Kailahun earlier in the year.

The traditional chiefs informed the SRSG that 80 percent of the houses within the district were destroyed during the war. They expressed concern about acute shortage of infrastructure and called on the government and the UN to assist with rehabilitation and reconstruction. They also emphasized the need for better coordination between the local authorities and the non-governmental organizations working in the district.

UNAMSIL Headquarters, Mammy Yoko, P. O. Box 5, Freetown, Sierra Leone
Tel: 232-22-273-183/4/5 Fax: 232-22-273-189

In response, the SRSG observed that there was need for the chiefs and the people to prioritize what is to be done, as all these could not be handled at the same time. “It is important that you coordinate properly with NGOs and necessary government agencies such as the District Recovery Committee and National Commission for Social Action [NaCSA] to get some of these problems solved,” he said.

The SRSG and his team were later taken on a tour of Kailahun town with a visit to projects built and rehabilitated by PAKBATT 3 peacekeepers.