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**SPECIAL REPRESENTATIVE MEETS WITH COMMISSIONERS OF THE  
TRUTH AND RECONCILIATION COMMISSION**

*Freetown* – The Special Representative of the Secretary-General (SRSG) in Sierra Leone, Ambassador Oluyemi Adeniji, today met with the members of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC). The seven-member team is composed of four national and three international commissioners and will be inaugurated tomorrow, 5 July, by President Ahmad Tejan Kabbah.

In his opening remarks, the SRSG said that with the progress made thus far in the peace process, it has become a challenge to establish transitional justice organs. He said that the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL) and the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) had worked closely to ensure that well experienced and capable persons were appointed as commissioners. The selection, he said, was also made after considering factors such as gender balance to ensure that “the Commission is not gender distorted.”

Ambassador Adeniji said UNAMSIL’s Human Rights Section and the human rights network in Sierra Leone have gathered some dossiers which should facilitate the work of the commissioners. He pointed out that Sierra Leoneans were comforted that the TRC and the Special Court for Sierra Leone will work simultaneously to promote justice and reconciliation.

He informed the Commissioners that fund-raising efforts to run the TRC have not yielded much as was the case with the Special Court. He expressed the hope that more donors would make generous contributions towards the TRC to enable it to meet its mandate.

In his response, the Chairman of the TRC, Rt. Rev. Dr Joseph Christain Humper, a national commissioner, thanked the UN for the progress made thus far in setting up the Commission. He however expressed concern over reports by the TRC’s interim secretariat on the funding situation which he described as “discouraging.”

Rt. Rev. Humper said the international community was underestimating the significance of the Commission in contributing to the Sierra Leone peace process. He stressed that the delayed commencement of the Commission had caused problems as most Sierra Leoneans, including ex-combatants and the victims of atrocities, are anxious to see it operating.

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The Chairman said the Commission's mandate could only be executed if the international community provides the necessary resources, which would then ensure justice, peace and respect for human rights in the country. "Not providing resources can be misconceived, misunderstood and unfortunate," he said, adding, "denying the Commission means to carry out its function is denial of justice itself."

The Commissioners are Professor John Kamara (Sierra Leone), Mr. Sylvanus Torto (Sierra Leone), and Hon. Justice Laura Augusta Ebunolorun Marcus-Jones (Sierra Leone), Ms. Yasmin Louise Sooka (South Africa), Madam Ajaaratou Santang Jow (Gambia) and Professor William Schabas (Canada).