

UNITED NATIONS



NATIONS UNIES

UNITED NATIONS MISSION IN SIERRA LEONE
(UNAMSIL)

PRESS RELEASE

10 May 2002

**DEPUTY SPECIAL REPRESENTATIVE ASSESSES PROGRESS ON
RESTORATION OF STATE AUTHORITY IN MAKENI AND MAGBURAKA**

Freetown – The Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Governance and Stabilization in Sierra Leone, Mr. Alan Doss, yesterday toured the towns of Makeni and Magburaka to assess progress on the restoration of civil authority in the area. He was also briefed on preparations for the 14 May presidential and parliamentary elections.

At the office of the Makeni Town Council, which is currently under renovation, Mr. Doss told the Town Chairman, Mr. Payamba Fona, and other town councilors that judging from his first visit to Makeni last year, the town has undergone “tremendous change,” although a lot still needs to be done. The Deputy Special Representative also visited the magistrate court where rehabilitation work is expected to start soon.

“Schools have reopened, returnees and displaced people are coming back,” he said, “These are all signs of progress, but I do understand the challenges ahead.” Mr. Doss disclosed that the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone’s (UNAMSIL) Trust Fund had just approved funds to rehabilitate district offices in Makeni. He also expressed the hope that next week’s elections would be held in a peaceful and safe environment “to make this the safest and freest elections that Sierra Leone has ever known.”

The Commanding Officer of Nigerian Battalion (NIBATT) 11 in Makeni, Lt. Col. Olukayode Keshinro, informed Deputy Special Representative that his troops have made adequate arrangements to assist the National Electoral Commission (NEC) in ensuring free, fair, transparent and inclusive elections within his area of responsibility. The peacekeepers continue to maintain full alertness particularly in voting centres, offices of NEC and political parties, and storage facilities for voting material and ballot boxes.

At UNAMSIL Sector 4 Headquarters in Magburaka, Mr. Doss learned that all battalions in the sector were ready to perform their assigned duties in facilitating balloting on 14 May. The sector recently received additional 30 trucks to assist in transporting electoral material and ballot boxes and the Government is also deploying 240 more police officers in the area to be deployed at voting centres.

The Deputy Special Representative expressed the hope to peacekeepers from Bangladeshi Battalion (BANBATT) 6 that elections will be successful.

“Your presence here is critical,” he said. “It is important that the elections are seen to be fair and credible, as this will assist with national reconciliation.” He reminded them that while the running of the elections was the responsibility of NEC, UNAMSIL was expected to assist in the process.

Mr. Doss later inspected building structures in Magburaka where the Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA) is rehabilitating the local district offices and the magistrate court. The projects, which are being funded through the UNAMSIL Trust Fund with workers drawn from ex-combatants and vulnerable youth, are expected to be completed in four weeks, according ADRA’s Project Manager Samuel Conteh.

Before flying back to Freetown, Mr. Doss, who was accompanied by the Chief of UNAMSIL Civil Affairs Section, Mr. Ismael Diallo, the officer in charge of the Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration Coordination Section, Mr. Mitonga Zongwe, and other UNAMSIL officials, also toured NEC offices and the Government Training Institute in Magburaka, where more than 500 ex-combatants are receiving training in various skills.