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(UNAMSIL)

PRESS RELEASE

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**ACTING SPECIAL REPRESENTATIVE HANDS OVER SCHOOL TO
COMMUNITY IN BOMBALI DISTRICT**

Freetown – The Acting Special Representative of the Secretary-General in Sierra Leone, Mr. Behrooz Sadry, yesterday handed over a primary school building to the people of Mathene Village outside Makeni in the northern district of Bombali. The Nigeria-Bombali Primary School was built by the Nigerian Battalion (NIBATT) 11 serving with the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL).

Speaking as the guest of honour at the ceremony which was attended by hundreds of people from surrounding communities, the Acting Special Representative commended the efforts of the officers and soldiers of NIBATT 11, noting that in addition to their sacrifices as peacekeepers, they had also found time to provide such an important educational edifice for the people, something he said would benefit the future of Sierra Leone. He went on to say that the peacekeepers had shown that they were “professional soldiers in mind and humanitarian officers at heart.”

Mr. Sadry urged the Government of Sierra Leone to maintain the school and to provide it with qualified teachers and materials. More than 200 children are expected to enroll at the school.

The Nigerian Deputy High Commissioner to Sierra Leone, Mr. John Oboh, commended the NIBATT 11 for the construction of the school, describing them as worthy ambassadors of their country. He said the two countries had always been together as one and would continue to be so, adding that Nigerian would continue to do whatever it could for Sierra Leone.

The Commanding Officer of NIBATT 11, Lt. Col. Olukayode Keshinro, said their choice to build a school as part of their humanitarian contribution to their host community was based on his battalion’s awareness of the importance of education in human development. He appealed to the community people, teachers and pupils to utilize, maintain and sustain the school. The commanding officer said that the school, which cost the peacekeepers more than US\$40,000, was a continuation of his battalion’s humanitarian assistance, which also included the provision of medical facilities to local communities and the campaign against drug abuse.

The Nigerian Contingent Commander and Commander of UNAMSIL’s Sector I, Brig. Gen. Steve Guar, then handed over the keys to the new school to the representative of

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the Minister of Education, Mr. Sandi Kpaka, who pledged his ministry's support to the school. He said Nigeria's assistance to Sierra Leone was not a new phenomenon.

Guests at the ceremony included UNAMSIL Force Commander Lt. Gen. Daniel Opande, Government officials, sector and battalion commanders. The ceremony was climaxed by cultural performances and dances and a drama on the need for education by NIBATT 11 peacekeepers.