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**ECOWAS LEADERS AND UN SPECIAL REPRESENTATIVE ATTEND
PRESIDENT KABBAH'S INAUGURATION**

Freetown – President Ahmad Tejan Kabbah was yesterday officially inaugurated as the fourth president of Sierra Leone at a colourful ceremony held in the capital, Freetown, and attended by several Heads of State from the Economic Community for West African States (ECOWAS) as well as the Special Representative of the Secretary-General in Sierra Leone, Ambassador Oluyemi Adeniji.

Thousands of people paraded the streets leading to the parliament building to celebrate the occasion. Dancing boys and girls in colourful costumes moved to beat of drums while men on stilts entertained the audience. The inauguration ceremony, witnessed by Presidents Olusegun Obasanjo of Nigeria, Lansana Conteh of Guinea, John Kufuor of Ghana, and Yahya Jammeh of The Gambia, was held simultaneously with the State opening of the first session of the Second Parliament of the Second Republic. Liberia was represented by its Vice President Moses Blah.

In his inaugural address, President Kabbah talked about the need for Sierra Leone to develop the capacity to feed itself and to rebuild and strengthen the country's infrastructure, border security, immigration, and healthcare services for all Sierra Leoneans. He also renewed his commitment to fight corruption in every sector of government.

The president said that one of the greatest challenges the country is going to face in the next few years is to find a lasting solution to the "youth problem." To neglect the concerns and condition of this group, he said, could produce a whole generation of unskilled, unemployed and disenchanting Sierra Leoneans.

In an address read on his behalf by Ambassador Adeniji, UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan congratulated President Kabbah for his inauguration, stressing that he had "no doubt that you are mindful of the tremendous responsibilities implicit in the overwhelming electoral support that you received." He said that Sierra Leone's just concluded elections, which were declared free and fair by the international community, were "a great demonstration of the political maturity of the Sierra Leonean people and their determination to make a clean break with their violent past."

"As their elected representatives, you must now, in your conduct and deliberations, uphold and sustain this new image of Sierra Leone," Mr. Annan said, adding that, "This

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can only be done through good governance, responsible leadership, mutual respect and the politics of inclusion.”

The UN Secretary-General urged the Government to address the unfinished aspects of the peace process, especially the reintegration of ex-combatants, the effective restoration of State authority and basic services throughout the country, and the promotion of justice, human rights, national reconciliation and the rule of law.

“In particular,” Mr. Annan said, “The capacity of the police and army must be developed so that these forces can maintain internal and external security without the presence of the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL).”

Also at the same occasion, President Obasanjo gave an address on the behalf of the chairman of ECOWAS, in absentia, and the visiting Heads of States. He congratulated President Kabbah and the Parliament and told them that this is more than just inaugurating a president into office and a parliament.

“We are celebrating victory. Victory which has been brought about by the will of the people in the first instance. Victory, which has been brought about by the support of your brothers and sisters in the ECOWAS sub-region, victory which has been brought about by the encouragement and the working together with the international community, particularly the United Nations,” he said.

“The uniqueness of this victory,” President Obasanjo said, “was that it was home grown. The people of Sierra Leone were the greatest winners because they have won the peace.”