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**UNAMSIL SENIOR OFFICIALS WITNESS VOTING PROCESS THROUGHOUT
SIERRA LEONE**

Freetown – The Special Representative of the Secretary-General in Sierra Leone, Ambassador Oluyemi Adeniji, and his two deputies, Mr. Behrooz Sadry and Mr. Alan Doss, yesterday toured dozens of polling stations throughout Sierra Leone where election officials informed them that voting was peaceful and turnout good as thousands of Sierra Leoneans turned out enthusiastically to vote in the country's presidential and parliamentary elections.

In all areas that they visited, voting was proceeding smoothly with no single incident of violence witnessed or reported. Representatives from various political parties stood side-by-side monitoring the conduct of the elections. The presence of international observers and local independent observers at polling stations reassured to the voters. National Electoral Commission (NEC) officials were also present to attend to minor complaints by some voters.

During his tour of Kabala, Makeni, Port Loko and Magburaka, Ambassador Adeniji observed that the towns were generally calm with an encouraging turnout of voters. There were no reports of intimidation or disruptions to the electoral process. Most polling officials at the centres he monitored indicated that voting materials were adequate.

In Makeni, however, the Special Representative met with about 100 voters who had come from Bo, Kenema, Pujehun and Mile 91 without transferring their registration and voting documents. They requested to be allowed to vote, and their complaints were referred to NEC officials.

Mr. Sadry, who is the Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Operations and Management, toured several polling stations in the eastern and western areas of Freetown, including the towns of Kissy and Goderich. At a polling station at Aberdeen Police Station, he noted with satisfaction that the process was proceeding peacefully and praised the voters as they waited patiently in long queues to cast their ballots. He also spoke to two amputees at the Aberdeen Amputee Camp, with one of them explaining that he had just cast his vote using his toe.

Mr. Sadry later met with NEC Chairman Walter Nicol who confirmed that the situation was calm and turnout high throughout the country. Mr. Sadry, however, expressed concern about the handicapped and elderly people queuing for long hours under the sun, to which Mr. Nicol replied that all polling stations had been instructed to give preference to disadvantaged voters.

At the Central Police Headquarters where he met with the Police Inspector, Mr. Keith Biddle, the Deputy Special Representative was informed that police officers were ready to work long hours to ensure adequate security at all polling stations.

During his tour of Koidu in the diamond-rich district of Kono, the Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Governance and Stabilization, Mr. Alan Doss, witnessed long queues forming outside several polling stations as hundreds of people waited patiently to cast their votes. Addressing voters, polling officers and party agents in several locations, he was assured that all were satisfied with the ongoing process.

At a polling station in Kailahun, a presiding officer showed Mr. Doss the NEC forms which had allowed voters to cast votes in areas different from where they registered. Voting queues in Kailahun town's 13 polling stations were still relatively long by 11:00 am. In Kailahun, isolated cases of under-age voting were noticed.

By the time Mr. Doss visited Tongo Fields, queues were relatively short, as most people had already cast their votes soon after the polling stations opened in the morning, a common feature witnessed throughout the country. Mr. Doss addressed voters and officials and congratulated them on the peaceful atmosphere that prevailed in the potentially volatile area of Tongo Fields.

Polling centres were also almost deserted by late afternoon in the town of Kenema with only a few voters trickling in. Joseph B. Aruna, the NEC Electoral Commissioner for the Eastern Region, informed Mr. Doss that most people had voted in the morning and the presence of many polling stations ensured that voters were processed faster.

In all locations, Mr. Doss congratulated commanding officers and other UNAMSIL staff for the remarkable support provided to the NEC in terms of logistics and security, as all materials were delivered on time and no incidents were reported. He was assured that plans were also in place to extend support to the NEC for the timely retrieval of elections materials.