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(UNAMSIL)*

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**FORCE COMMANDER COMMENDS UNAMSIL PEACEKEEPERS
FOR THEIR ROLE IN THE ELECTIONS**

Freetown – Following their contributions to the national elections in provision of security and logistical support, United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL) peacekeepers yesterday received commendations from Force Commander Lt. Gen. Daniel I. Opande during a visit to the northern towns of Makeni, Yele, Masingbi and Alikalia.

Addressing Bangladeshi Battalion 6 troops in Yele, the Force Commander paid tribute to the peacekeepers for their discipline and steadfastness in carrying out their assigned duties during the elections. He attributed the massive turnout of voters and the peaceful atmosphere during the elections to the troops' vigilance and dedication to duty.

Lt. Gen. Opande also addressed community leaders who had gathered at the Yele Town Hall to receive him, and urged them to embrace the peace, accept the election results and resolve to settle all conflicts through dialogue, not violence.

In Masingbi and Alikalia, the Force Commander applauded the role of the peacekeepers in the maintenance of peace and security in their various locations and urged them not to relent in their efforts.

Upon arrival at Makeni, a former stronghold of the Revolutionary United Front (RUF), the Force Commander congratulated the Commanding Officer of the Nigerian Battalion 11, Lt. Col. Olukayode Keshinro, for the exemplary way his troops coordinated election activities in his area of responsibility, stressing that Makeni was one of the most vulnerable points during the elections.

Lt. Gen. Opande noted with satisfaction UNAMSIL peacekeepers' role in providing an enabling environment for elections that have been acknowledged as the most peaceful and successful elections in Sierra Leone in recent history. He expressed appreciation to the officers and men and women of the battalion for their ongoing sacrifices.