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*UNITED NATIONS MISSION IN SIERRA LEONE  
(UNAMSIL)*

**PRESS RELEASE**

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**DEPUTY SPECIAL REPRESENTATIVE INAUGURATES DISTRICT OFFICE IN  
NORTHERN SIERRA LEONE**

*Freetown* – The Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Operations and Management (DSRSG), Mr. Behrooz Sadry, and the Minister of Local Government and Community Development, Mr. Sidique Brima, on Saturday, 17 August, officiated at the hand-over of the offices and residence of the Senior District Officer (SDO) – the highest district government official – in Makeni, Bombali district. The event also marked the return of the Resident Minister of the Northern Region.

In his welcome address, the provincial secretary, Mr. G.G. Banya, said the ceremony was very significant because “government authority is now formally restored to the Northern Region.” He said that in the past, the SDO’s office had been a unifying symbol for the paramount chiefs, the people and the government, expressing the hope that the new administrative headquarters would unify the people towards lasting peace. He noted that ex- combatants rehabilitated and refurbished the building with support from the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL), the UN Development Programme (UNDP) and the UK Department for International Development (DFID).

In his address, Mr. Sadry said the inauguration marked the attainment of “a definitive benchmark” in the restoration of civil authority in the northern province, especially as Makeni was once the headquarters of the former Revolutionary United Front (RUF). The process of the restoration of civil authority, which started with the deployment of the Sierra Leone Police and the return of paramount chiefs, culminated in the return of key provincial and district officials, including the SDOs, throughout the country, he said.

The DSRSG said that along with the restoration of state authority comes “state responsibilities which the government is committed to uphold.” He urged the population to exercise patience to enable the government and other stakeholders to meet their responsibilities to consolidate peace-building efforts after the 10-year war.

Mr. Sadry also pointed out that judicial coverage throughout the country was a critical area that needed immediate attention in the restoration of state authority. In this regard, “UNAMSIL will commence work to rehabilitate, refurbish and provide furniture for the Magistrate’s court buildings in Makeni, Magburaka and Kabala,” he declared.

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In his address, the Resident Minister of the North, Mr. Alex Alie Kargbo, thanked UNAMSIL and other stakeholders for bringing peace to Sierra Leone and for assistance in the restoration of government authority in the northern province. “We shall give UNAMSIL the fullest cooperation in consolidating the peace and work with them to bring development and lasting peace in the community,” he said.

The Minister of Local Government and Community Development, Mr. Brima, said the inauguration of the buildings was remarkable and symbolic. In a reference to the past, he said, “We must prevent a recurrence of the carnage and learn to love one another and maintain fairness and social justice amongst all citizens.” He said the government would begin local government elections this month to further consolidate the restoration of civil authority. “We want a departure from the trend of putting government appointees in position at local government administration, and we shall ensure transparency and all democratic principles in the conduct of local government and paramount chiefs elections,” he said.

The delegation was received on arrival in Makeni by the Commanding Officer of Nigerian Battalion (NIBATT) 11, Lt. Col. Olukayode Keshinro. Conducting the delegation to Nigeria-Sierra Leone Unity Community Primary School under construction in Mateni, the Commanding Officer explained that the school was being built with the participation of the local community and funded by the peacekeepers of NIBATT 11. The primary school, which will on completion accommodate about 300 students, will also be provided with furniture by the peacekeepers.