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(UNAMSIL)*

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SENIOR UN OFFICIAL VISITS SIERRA LEONE

Freetown – The Director of the Africa II Division within the United Nations Department of Political Affairs, Mr. Youssef Mahmoud, is currently visiting Sierra Leone for talks with officials from the UN Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL), the Government of Sierra Leone and civil society and to assess current political developments in the country.

Mr. Mahmoud arrived in Freetown over the weekend and has so far held discussions with several senior UNAMSIL officials including the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Ambassador Oluyemi Adeniji, and his deputy for operations and management, Mr. Behrooz Sadry, as well as Force Commander Lt. Gen. Daniel I. Opande, who briefed him on the operations of UNAMSIL.

Following his meetings with UNAMSIL officials, Mr. Mahmoud met with the UN Country Team, who briefed him on its post-election plan of action which focuses on supporting resettlement and reintegration, poverty alleviation, good governance and strengthening security. He also held separate meetings with leaders of various political parties focusing on peace-building measures including the need to maintain law and order and to widen national participation in democracy and governance.

On 19 June, the Africa II Division director, accompanied Ambassador Adeniji, held discussions with Vice President Solomon Berewa focusing on several political and economic issues including the state of the economy, the problems of reconstruction and reconciliation and the impact on Sierra Leone of the current conflict in neighbouring Liberia and the scheduled summit in Rabat, Morocco, of Mano River Union leaders.

Further meetings were held with leaders of several organizations such as the National Commission for Social Action and the National Committee on Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration and non-governmental organizations to discuss reintegration programmes for ex-combatants and the resettlement of refugees and internally displaced persons.

Mr. Mahmoud has also been visiting peacekeepers in the field. He traveled to Makeni, Bombali District, and Magburaka in Tonkolili District yesterday where he met with troops from the Nigerian and Bangladeshi battalions. He also held a brief meeting with the

***UNAMSIL Headquarters, Mammy Yoko, P. O. Box 5, Freetown, Sierra Leone
Tel: 232-22-273-183/4/5 Fax: 232-22-273-189***

leadership of the Revolutionary United Front Party and civil society groups in Makeni, who called for assistance from the international community in the areas of education, health and agriculture as well as rehabilitation of the social amenities in the district. Today he is traveling to the eastern towns of Koidu and Kenema.