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**SPECIAL REPRESENTATIVE VISITS NEWLY DEPLOYED PEACEKEEPERS  
IN PORT LOKO AND BOMBALI DISTRICTS**

*Freetown* – The Special Representative of the Secretary-General in Sierra Leone, Ambassador Oluyemi Adeniji, yesterday visited the towns of Port Loko, Magburaka, Makeni and Masingbi to welcome peacekeepers from Bangladesh and Nigeria who have recently joined the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL) and to assess the security situation and the readiness of the troops for the 14 May presidential and parliamentary elections.

Bangladeshi Signals (BANSIG) and Bangladeshi Battalion (BANBATT) 6 replaced BANBATT 3 following the latter's completion of its tour of duty while Nigerian Battalion (NIBATT) 11 and 12 replaced NIBATT 7 and 8 respectively. The new battalions arrived in the mission area last month.

Following separate military briefings by UNAMSIL Sector 1 Commander Brig. Gen. Steve Guar and the Commanding Officer of NIBATT 12, Lt. Col. Audu Baba, Ambassador Adeniji gave welcome addresses to BANSIG and NIBATT 12 troops deployed in Port Loko. He expressed satisfaction with the preparations being made by the peacekeepers for next month's elections, reminding them that since they will be engaged in the "sensitive distribution" of election material, which will include ballot papers and boxes, they should maintain a high level of readiness and should always be on alert.

The UNAMSIL Regional Electoral Coordinator in Port Loko, Mr. Kundan Das Shrestha, briefed the Special Representative on his team's plans for the elections, whose area of responsibility covers both Port Loko and Kambia districts. He observed that preparations for the elections were proceeding smoothly and that political campaigning was already in full swing within the two districts.

Before departing Port Loko for UNAMSIL Sector 4 Headquarters in Magburaka, Ambassador Adeniji visited the Bangla-Sierra Friendship School built recently by Bangladeshi peacekeepers.

In Magburaka, Ambassador Adeniji received briefings on the security situation in the area and preparations for elections from BANBATT 6 Commanding Officer Col. Hussein

Shawkat and the UNAMSIL Regional Electoral Coordinator for the north, Mr. Vincent Van Breda.

Addressing BANBATT 6 peacekeepers, the Special Representative told them that they had replaced BANBATT 3, which “established a great reputation” in the area. “Your challenge therefore is immense,” he said, “because you are now being called upon not just to replace BANBATT 3 but also to make a great contribution towards peace in Sierra Leone.”

Later, Ambassador Adeniji visited the town of Makeni in Bombali District where NIBATT 11 peacekeepers are deployed. Following a military briefing by the battalion’s Commanding Officer, Lt. Col. Olukayode O. Keshinro, the Special Representative urged them to focus on the upcoming elections so that “we can ensure that they are held in a fair, free, transparent and peaceful atmosphere.” He pointed out that in addition to providing umbrella security and logistical assistance, they could also be called upon to assist the Sierra Leone Police in maintaining peace and “ensuring that voters are not molested during and immediately after the elections.”

“Success usually comes by working hard day and night,” he told NIBATT 11 peacekeepers, adding that “at the end of the day you will have achieved personal success that will enable you to look back at some point in the future and say ‘I contributed to the current peace in Sierra Leone.’”

Before flying back to Freetown, Ambassador Adeniji visited the town of Masingbi where a company of BANBATT 6 peacekeepers is deployed.