



UNITED NATIONS

NATIONS UNIES

UNITED NATIONS MISSION IN SIERRA LEONE
(UNAMSIL)

PRESS RELEASE

25 April 2002

**SPECIAL REPRESENTATIVE VISITS MAGBUNTOSO, MILE 91
AND LUNSAR TO ASSESS PREPARATIONS FOR ELECTIONS**

Freetown – The Special Representative of the Secretary-General in Sierra Leone, Ambassador Oluyemi Adeniji, yesterday visited the towns of Magbuntoso, Mile 91 and Lunsar to assess the security situation and the readiness of UN Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL) peacekeepers for the 14 May presidential and parliamentary elections.

In Magbuntoso, Maj. Steven Mutuku, Commanding Officer of the “A” Company of Kenyan Battalion (KENBATT) 8, briefed Ambassador Adeniji on the reintegration of ex-combatants and the recent registration of voters, noting that more than 2,500 voters were registered in the small town.

Ambassador Adeniji expressed satisfaction with the preparations being made by the peacekeepers for next month’s elections, reminding them to “continue with their normal patrolling” to ensure that UNAMSIL is “maintaining an atmosphere conducive to free and fair elections.”

In Mile 91, the Special Representative received briefings on the preparations for elections from Lt. Col. Shah Alam, Commanding Officer of Bangladeshi Engineering (BANENG) 2 who are currently rehabilitating the 54-km road between Mile 91 and Magburaka. About 20 kms of the road are seriously damaged, with some parts totally flooded during the rainy season. Ambassador Adeniji congratulated the peacekeepers for their work, describing it as “a major contribution to peace-building in Sierra Leone.”

Later, the Special Representative visited the town of Lunsar where Bangladeshi Artillery (BANARTY) 2 peacekeepers are deployed. In his briefing, the commander of the troops informed Ambassador Adeniji that the situation was conducive to conduct “free, fair, transparent and inclusive elections.”

Lunsar, a formerly Revolutionary United Front (RUF) stronghold, is “gradually returning to normalcy” as described by Col. Ali, who said that the Housing Settlement Committee has “successfully solved the disputes” over houses occupied illegally by the ex-RUF members. Paramount chiefs in all the chiefdoms have returned and resumed their full functions. BANARTY 2 is providing various kinds of assistance to the Sierra Leone Police, which is “gradually taking over the responsibility of the law and order.”

Before flying back to Freetown, Ambassador Ademiji helped in the distribution of food items, clothes, and educational material donated by BANARTY peacekeepers to the children of the Bangladeshi Memorial Secondary School.