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(UNAMSIL)*

PRESS RELEASE

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**CHIEF MILITARY OBSERVER TOURS CENTRAL AND SOUTHERN
PROVINCES**

Freetown - The Chief Military Observer (CMO) of the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL), Maj. Gen. Syed Athar Ali, yesterday toured the towns of Makeni and Magburaka in the central districts of Bombali and Tonkolili and the southern provincial towns of Pujehun and Zimmi to assess the security and refugee situation.

In Makeni, the leader of Team Site 4 of Military Observers (MILOBs), Lt. Col. Stanley Kigombe, briefed the CMO upon his arrival on the current security and humanitarian situation, which he said was calm and peaceful. The team leader informed Maj. Gen. Athar that the re-integration of the ex-combatants was progressing well and that most of the people in Makeni, including internally displaced persons, had been provided with agricultural inputs by non-governmental organizations.

The CMO made a brief stopover at Bangladeshi Level 2 Hospital in Magburaka on his way to UNAMSIL's Sector 4 Headquarters in the same town, where he was met by the Sector Commander, Brig. Gen. Iqbal Karim Bhuiya, who briefed him on the activities of MILOBs in the area.

From Magburaka, the CMO flew to Sub-Team Site 8 in the town of Pujehun, where the Operations Officer, Maj. Allah Nawaz, briefed him on the current influx of Liberian refugees and Sierra Leonean returnees fleeing from fighting in Liberia. He said the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) was accommodating the refugees by re-activating previously abandoned camps. He further explained that despite this, the general security situation remained stable.

Maj. Nawaz said his team was in constant contact with officials from the National Committee on Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration in Bo and Pujehun. More than 4,500 ex-combatants had registered for skills training in agriculture, public works and vocational/small enterprise development.

The CMO later visited the "B" Company of Ghanaian Battalion 5 in Zimmi and the Maple Barracks of 14 Battalion of the Republic of Sierra Leone Armed Forces (RSLAF), where the Commanding Officer, Lt. Col. Lawrence Konde, informed him that there was no

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immediate threat to the peace and security in the area. The CMO advised the Sierra Leone battalion to establish its authority before UNAMSIL eventually withdraws.