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**ACTING FORCE COMMANDER WELCOMES NEW PEACEKEEPERS
FROM NEPAL AND ZAMBIA**

Freetown - The Acting Force Commander of the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL), Maj. Gen. Martin L. Agwai, yesterday traveled to the southern town of Moyamba and the diamond-town of Tongo Fields in the eastern district of Kenema to welcome a new batch of peacekeepers from Nepal and Zambia who have just joined the Mission.

Following a briefing by the Commanding Officer of the Nepalese Battalion (NEPBATT) 2, Lt. Col. Pun Ramesh, on the general security situation in the area, the Acting Force Commander, in his welcome remarks, said he was pleased that the peacekeepers had received pre-deployment training before coming to the mission area and that they were aware of the historical background of the conflict and the current situation in Sierra Leone. He urged them to be vigilant and to uphold the principles of the United Nations.

Lt. Col. Ramesh expressed concern over the fate of houses currently occupied illegally by ex-combatants who are being threatened with evictions by local youths groups. He said another potential source of problems was the delay by the National Committee for Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration in paying demobilization allowances to ex-combatants.

The Moyamba District Reintegration Officer, Mr. Joseph Konte, informed the Acting Force Commander that there was need to sensitize local youths so they could appreciate the efforts being made by the government and the international community to address their plight.

Maj. Gen. Agwai carried the same welcome message to the diamond town of Tongo Fields where he met with peacekeepers of the Zambian Battalion (ZAMBATT) 4 led by the Deputy Commander of Sector 3, Col. George Amamoo, and the Commanding Officer of the battalion, Lt. Col. Peter Chama. He also advised the troops to assist in bringing together government officials, local chiefs and the youths groups to resolve housing and mining problems in the area.

The two battalions replace NEPBATT 1 and ZAMBATT 3 peacekeepers who recently left Sierra Leone upon completion of their tour of duty.

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