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UNITED NATIONS MISSION IN SIERRA LEONE

(UNAMSIL)

FACT SHEET 5:

Presidential and Parliamentary Elections Voting System

Voting Dates:

Special Election Day	10 May 2002
Presidential and Parliamentary	14 May 2002

Voting Time:

7:00am – 5:00pm

Presidential Elections

The presidential election will follow the same pattern as in the past; it will be a contest between the nominated candidates, so votes will be cast for individual candidates. In order to be declared a winner, a presidential candidate must obtain not less than 55% of the total number of valid votes cast at the election nationwide.

If a winner does not emerge from the first election, a second election, called a **run-off**, will be held **within 14 days** after the first results are declared. The run-off election will be a straight contest between the two candidates who came first and second in the first election. This means that any other candidate who contested in the first will be eliminated from the run-off election. The winner of the run-off will only need to get more votes than the other candidate.

Parliamentary Elections: The District Block Representational System

Sierra Leone's May parliamentary elections will be held under a new electoral system called the District Block Representational System. This system has been put in place for two basic reasons. First, it is very clear that the large majority of Sierra Leoneans do not like the National List Proportional Representation system that was used for the 1996 parliamentary elections, because it does not make

it possible for them to know the specific persons who represent them in parliament.

Secondly, although it was also very clear that the majority of Sierra Leoneans would have preferred the single member constituency system, the prolonged civil war produced thousands of refugees as well as diverse internal movements of persons, thus resulting in a massive dislocation of the country's population. It is common knowledge that some places were overflowing with people, while other places were virtually depopulated and have only recently begun to see the return of the original inhabitants.

In circumstances where nobody knows for sure how many people are in what city, town, village or place, it is simply impossible to divide Sierra Leone into fair, equitable, and credible single-member constituencies. So, the district block system has been put in place specifically for the next parliamentary elections in the belief that it is the most reasonable solution to the country's current situation.

Under the district block system, the **existing 14 districts** will be used as the basis for the parliamentary elections. Each district will be regarded as one **constituency**, so the district will be **not** be further sub-divided into smaller constituencies. Instead, each district will be given a **block of eight** seats. Each political party will compete for all eight seats.

For this purpose, before elections are held, each political party will submit to the National Electoral Commission a list of its candidates, arranged in a ranking. Unlike in the presidential election, the electorate will cast their votes not for individual candidates, but for a **political party**.

After the elections, the eight parliamentary seats for each district will be shared among the political parties that contested the elections in that district, on the basis of their percentage share of the total number of valid votes cast in the whole district. For example, if a party obtains 50% of all the valid votes cast in the whole district, it will win four of the district's eight seats; and the first four names on that party's list of candidates would be deemed to have been elected to Parliament.

It is to be noted, however, that a political party must obtain a minimum of 12.5 per cent of the total number of valid votes cast in the respective district in order

to be eligible for a share of the district's seats. Any party that is not able to obtain the minimum number of votes will not get a parliamentary seat.