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**UNAMSIL DEPUTY SPECIAL REPRESENTATIVE TOURS MINING SITES  
IN BOMBALI, KONO AND KENEMA DISTRICTS**

*Freetown* – The Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Governance and Stabilization, Mr. Alan Doss, on 30 September conducted a two-day tour of the diamond-rich areas in the northern town of Kamakwie, Koidu in eastern Kono District and the southern town of Tongo Fields in Kenema District to assess mining activities and to hold discussions with local chiefs, representatives of youth groups and local officials. The Minister of Mineral Resources, Mr. Mohammed S. Deen, and Youth and Sports Minister Dr. Dennis Bright accompanied Mr. Doss.

In Kamakwie, Bombali District, where mineral explorations have just started following the recent discovery of diamonds in the area, local officials informed the Deputy Special Representative that so far three mining licenses have been issued. Mining activities have been temporarily stopped while a mining committee which issues licenses process applications.

Addressing a gathering of local chiefs and youth groups after touring mining sites in Kamakwie, Mr. Doss said the UN would help with the recovery process to rebuild Sierra Leone, “but we can only do a small part,” adding, “Most of the work will be done by you.” He urged them to use diamonds and other resources for the benefit of all the people in the area. The Deputy Special Representative expressed delight at the news of the planned rehabilitation of the local hospital, which he said was an important sign of peace and recovery in the chiefdom.

Emphasizing that young people must benefit most directly from the peace because the future of Sierra Leone lies with them, Mr. Doss appealed to the youths to channel their energies towards developing their area. “You are rich in human and natural resources. Bring them together so that people benefit from the peace,” he told them.

The Mines Minister called for the formation of mining committees in all mining chiefdoms. The five-member committees, to be chaired by Paramount Chiefs, will approve all mining licenses. It was also announced that the Government had set up a diamond area development fund, using its share of revenues to be collected from mining license fees, to encourage licensing and legal mining. These funds are to be made available directly to the Chiefdoms as an incentive to control mining in their areas.

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Following a tour of two diamond-mining sites in Koidu conducted by the UNAMSIL Sector 5 Commander, Brig. Gen. Ijaz Awan, the Deputy Special Representative held a series of meetings with the local chiefs, representatives of youth groups including the Movement for Concerned Kono Youths (MOCKY) and the Kono District Youth League, as well as with local district officials.

In his discussions with the youth representatives, Mr. Doss emphasized the need for the people of Kono to settle their differences peacefully. “You need jobs in Kono and for jobs to be created you need investment. But without peace and stability, there will be no investment, and without investment there will be no jobs.” He called on the youths to go back to school and to engage in other economic activities not just mining, adding that “one day diamonds will run out and without education and skills, there will be no future for young people like yourselves.”

The Minister of Youth and Sports outlined the Government’s new policy on youth, and pledged to continue dialogue to address the challenges, such as lack of employment and educational opportunities, facing the youth. The youth groups assured the visiting delegation that they would work towards achieving these common objectives through peaceful and legal means.

In Tongo Fields, Kenema, UNAMSIL officials briefed Mr. Doss on efforts to resolve disputes arising from the illegal occupation of houses by ex-combatants, and to revive the mining sector.

In his statement before the local elders and youths, the Deputy Special Representative reiterated the importance of resolving disputes “in a peaceful, open and fair manner,” adding, “the UN will not take sides. You must settle them [disputes] in a way that is satisfactory to you.” Mr. Doss expressed the hope that the spirit of the May elections, which were held in Tongo in a peaceful manner, would continue and “if it does, the UN will be here to help you.”

During the two-day tour, the Chief of UNAMSIL’s Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration Section, Mr. Mitonga Zongwe, and other officials from UNAMSIL, the UN Development Programme (UNDP) and the Government of Sierra Leone also accompanied Mr. Doss.