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**DEPUTY SPECIAL REPRESENTATIVE HANDS OVER MAGISTRATE COURT
BUILDINGS IN MAKENI AND MAGBURAKA**

Freetown – On 7 September, the Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Governance and Stabilization, Mr. Alan Doss, handed over two newly rehabilitated Magistrate Courts in the Makeni and Magburaka districts of the northern region. The courts were rehabilitated and furnished with the support from UNAMSIL Trust Fund provided by the Government of Japan and the Netherlands.

Vice President Solomon Berewa inaugurated the opening of the courts at a ceremony attended by cabinet ministers, members of Parliament, the Chief Justice, provincial and district officials, as well as representatives of donor governments and organizations. The Magistrate Court will sit in Makeni on 9 September for the first time in more than 10 years.

In a keynote address, the DSRSG pointed out that the restoration of the judiciary in Sierra Leone marks the beginning of an era in which citizens are given the chance to address their grievances through the courts of law rather than taking the law into their own hands.

While the DSRSG pointed out that the opening of the courts constitutes “an important step towards the restoration of the judiciary,” he stressed that the “buildings are just the beginning” and that “it is what happens between the walls that counts.” The Deputy Special Representative said that international community attaches particular importance and priority to the promotion of justice and the rule of law, including the functioning of courts. He added that the Magistrate Court in Kambia District is now functioning thanks to the support from the UN Development Programme (UNDP) and that work will soon start to rehabilitate the courts in Koinadugu and Kono districts with the support of the UNAMSIL Trust Fund.

The Vice President urged the judiciary to provide service to all the people “and not to serve itself.” He promised that his government would ensure that the judiciary functions the way it should and called on those in the legal profession to dispense justice because upholding the rule of law contributes to peace. “Without a properly functioning judiciary, everything will collapse,” the Vice President warned, adding that without justice, the objectives of anti-corruption and good governance cannot be realized.

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Noting that a lack of funds is the main impediment to the proper functioning of courts, Sierra Leone's Chief Justice, Mr. Abdulai Timbo, said that the justices of the peace soon to be established in each district would complement the work of the judiciary.