

UNITED NATIONS



NATIONS UNIES

UNITED NATIONS MISSION IN SIERRA LEONE
(UNAMSIL)

PRESS RELEASE

20 September 2002

SIERRA LEONE CHILDREN CELEBRATE INTERNATIONAL DAY OF PEACE

Freetown – About 100 children drawn from several child advocacy groups in Sierra Leone yesterday went on a “Peace Bus” tour of the capital, Freetown, escorted by a motorcycle phalanx of the Sierra Leone Police, delivering messages of peace to officials from the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL) and the Government. The Peace Bus was part of activities to mark the International Day of Peace on 21 September, whose theme this year is “Global Ceasefire and Non-violence.”

The children, drawn from Children’s Forum, Talking Drum Studio, GOAL and Cooperazione Internazionale (COOPI), appealed to the Government and all adults to “protect us the children.” Delivering a peace message to the Vice President Solomon Berewa at his Spur Road office, the children called on the government to ensure that their childhood was protected. In his response, the vice president assured the children that his government was committed to protecting the children of Sierra Leone who “have suffered for far too long.” He said that what the children needed was education, shelter and food.

The Vice President, however, pleaded with the children to obey their parents and their teachers. “Study hard in school and avoid those things that destroy your childhood,” he said.

At UNAMSIL Headquarters at Mammy Yoko, the children presented the same message to the Acting Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Behrooz Sadry. Mr. Sadry assured the children that UNAMSIL would do all in its power to ensure their future and appealed to them to be law-abiding.

The children, who were immaculately dressed, also took a similar message to the Inspector General of Sierra Leone Police, Brima Archer Kamara, Deputy Defence Minister Joe Blell, the Director-General of Defence, Mr. K.O. Bah, and the leaders of the three political parties represented in Parliament, all of whom assured the children that they would work in the best interest of the children of Sierra Leone.

Earlier during the day at the Victoria Park in central Freetown, the Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Governance and Stabilization, Mr. Alan Doss, appealed to Sierra Leonean boys to spare the girlhood of the girls. By so doing, he said in his keynote address at a ceremony held in the park, there would always be peace in Sierra Leone. Mr. Doss urged the children to demand peace from the adults.

UNAMSIL Headquarters, Mammy Yoko, P. O. Box 5, Freetown, Sierra Leone
Tel: 232-22-273-183/4/5 Fax: 232-22-273-189

In his address at the same occasion, the Minister of Youth and Sports, Dr. Dennis Bright, emphasized the importance of peace to the welfare of children. He said that one way peace could be sustained in the country was for the children to imbibe a culture of non-violence. The minister appealed to the next generation of Sierra Leoneans to denounce violence of any sort, adding that disputes should be resolved only through dialogue.

The Deputy Minister of Children's Affairs, Mrs. Memunatu Koroma, called on all Sierra Leoneans to play their part for the peace in the country to be sustained. "No more fighting or quarrelling in schools," she appealed to the children. Mrs. Koroma, however, expressed concern that the peace in the country could be affected by the conflict in Liberia. She appealed to all "who have power" to continue helping Sierra Leone for the sake of the children.