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**UN Envoy meets Ambassador-designate of the Russian Federation and
New Vatican Ambassador to Liberia**

Monrovia, Liberia - The Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Alan Doss, together with senior UNMIL officials met with the Ambassador-designate of the Russian Federation to Liberia, Mr. Roman Voloshchenko, and the new Vatican Ambassador to Liberia, Archbishop George Antonysamy, to discuss the role of the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) in the post-war phase of the country, the challenges faced by the Liberian administration, and ways for better cooperation and partnerships between the Mission and the new envoys.

Special Representative Doss highlighted the recent political developments in the country, especially the successful elections and the inauguration of the new government led by President Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf. However, he cautioned that although some improvements are already evident and energetic steps are being taken to get the country back on its feet, this will take time as “much work still needs to be done.” He stressed the need for employment opportunities for youth, especially the ex-combatants. “While the President’s reform programme will help to promote economic growth, there is now an urgent need for the international community to fund immediate employment initiatives,” Mr. Doss said.

He reiterated that UNMIL is committed to providing a secure and stable environment that will allow the new government to push forward its reform agenda. “UNMIL stands ready to provide the required security to allow the government to implement its programmes and to create a secure environment that will help attract foreign investment to Liberia,” Mr. Doss said.

Ambassador Voloshchenko, who is resident in Accra, Ghana, remarked on the current political, socio-economic, financial and legal situation in Liberia in particular as they impact on foreign investment opportunities. He also spoke about Russia’s initiatives in helping to develop Liberia’s education sector and mentioned that 16 Liberian students are currently pursuing their studies in Moscow.

Recognizing that Russia is a permanent member of the United Nations Security Council, the Special Representative expressed his appreciation for the invaluable support and strong commitment that the Russian Federation has demonstrated for United Nations peacekeeping operations in Liberia and West Africa.

Archbishop Antonysamy, who is resident in Conakry, Guinea and who had just presented his credentials to President Johnson-Sirleaf, conveyed the Church’s satisfaction on the work of the UN in Liberia and spoke about the Church’s goal to assist the country as it enters this new phase of reconstruction and development.

Praising the active participation and work of the Catholic Church in Liberia, Mr. Doss stated that the United Nations in Liberia would continue to maintain close relations with the Church and with representatives of all the faiths, as “Liberia is not of one but many faiths. The communities of faith are uniquely placed to encourage reconciliation in the aftermath of the war”.
