



United Nations and

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# LIBERIA

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## UN Peace-building Office in Liberia

In July 1997, after seven years of civil war, a new Government was elected, through a process declared free and fair by the [United Nations Observer Mission in Liberia \(UNOMIL\)](#), the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and other observers from the international community. Following the elections and the withdrawal of UNOMIL, the United Nations, after consultations held with President Charles Taylor, established, on 1 November 1997, the United Nations Peace-building Support Office in Liberia (UNOL). On 12 December 1997, [Mr. Felix Downes-Thomas](#) (Gambia) was appointed as Representative of the Secretary-General in Liberia and Head of UNOL. The Office is to support the Government's efforts to consolidate peace and democracy, and promote national reconciliation and the rule of law, including the protection of human rights. It is also to contribute to subregional efforts to normalize relations between Liberia and its neighbours. Most recently, the mandate of UNOL has been [extended by the Security Council](#) until 31 December 2001.

## UNOL Activities

Since its establishment, the main focus of UNOL has been to provide the Government of Liberia with support in its efforts to consolidate peace, promote national reconciliation and strengthen its democratic institutions. UNOL has also been providing a political framework for harmonizing and energizing the efforts of the United Nations system on matters relating to post-conflict peace-building. The Office has continued to assist the Government in facilitating communication with the United Nations on matters relating to peace-building and in providing political support to efforts to mobilize international assistance for national reconstruction.

UNOL provided political and technical assistance to the Government in the critical exercise of the destruction of the large quantities of weapons and ammunition which had been collected during Liberia's civil war. On 19 October 1999, Liberia, in cooperation with ECOMOG & ECOWAS's Military Observer Group there -- and the United Nations, completed the destruction of arms and ammunition collected during the disarmament process. This exercise was financed in part with contributions from the United Nations.

UNOL has also endeavoured to facilitate communications between the Government of Liberia and the United Nations as well as with the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) on peace-building and other matters related to subregional peace and security.

### **Humanitarian Aspects**

Despite some positive developments, however, Liberia continues to face a series of complex internal and external problems. The country suffers from crushing poverty and the unemployment rate stands at 80%. Most of the ex-combatants from the civil war remain unemployed and funds are unavailable for their reintegration into civil society. These unemployed ex-combatants are a potential source of internal unrest and sub-regional instability, constituting an issue that is to be addressed by the international community. It is estimated that some 500,000 refugees, internally-displaced persons and returnees are in Liberia, including some 90,000 refugees from Sierra Leone. Liberia continues to rely heavily on food aid.

- [For news and recent developments](#)
- [For more information on humanitarian aspects](#)
- [For UN documentation](#)

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