My dear friends,

For some of us, peace is a day-to-day reality. Our streets are safe; our children go to school. Where the fabric of society is strong, the precious gifts of peace can almost go unremarked.

But for far too many people in the world today, those gifts are only an elusive dream. They live in chains: a climate of insecurity and fear. It is mainly for them that this day exists.

Twenty-five years ago, the General Assembly proclaimed the International Day of Peace as a day of global ceasefire and non-violence. The United Nations has observed it ever since. It is meant to get people not just thinking of peace, but doing something about it.

Yet, on this day as on the other 364, violence continues to claim innocent lives. And these last few weeks have seen tragic new escalations of conflict in several parts of the world.

The United Nations works for peace in many ways. We are doing our utmost to prevent further bloodshed. And we have had some successes.

States are paying more attention to preventive diplomacy. UN peacekeeping missions -- and our efforts to support democracy and promote human rights -- are making a difference. And individual citizens everywhere, men and women in every society, are working to relieve suffering, and to build bridges between people of different faiths or cultures.

In fact, there are fewer wars today than in previous decades. But still far too many. Every casualty of conflict is a failure, which reminds us how much more there is to do.

In that spirit, I call on people everywhere to observe one minute of silence today, in the name of peace. Let us remember the victims of war. And let each of us pledge to do more, wherever we can make a difference, to bring about lasting peace.

Kofi Annan
United Nations Secretary-General
I am pleased to be here today as Liberians and United Nations military, police and civilian staff representing a number of different countries have come together to jointly celebrate the International Day of Peace.

Since the signing of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement in Accra in August 2003, Liberians have demonstrated their desire to live in peace. Liberians living in all parts of the country joined hands and voted for peace during the historic elections last year. I am sure all of you see the many positive changes that peace has brought to your country. We all know that much remains to be done. But we are confident that with perseverance and dedication these tasks can be fulfilled. The international community will continue to support the Government in its national recovery and development efforts.

IDP was established in 1981 by the UN General Assembly to be observed as a day of ceasefire and non-violence throughout the world and celebrated annually around the globe. Each year, while at the UN headquarters in New York, the Day is highlighted with Secretary-General Kofi Annan's message on this Day.

The celebrations in Liberia marking the International Day of Peace (IDP) culminated in a colourful cultural show that saw UNMIL peacekeepers and Liberian artists thrill thousands of spectators who converged at the Antoinette Tubman Stadium (ATS) in Monrovia on 21 September. Participants also signed a Manifesto for Peace that read: “I pledge in my daily life, in my family, my work, my community, my country and my region to refrain from violence and nurture world peace.”

IDP is a time to promote peace through cultural activities that bring people together to appreciate and respect one another. UNMIL’s Officer-in-Charge, DSRSG Luiz Carlos da Costa, shared his pleasure to be part of the celebration in which Liberians appreciate “the many positive changes that peace has brought to the country.” In his remarks, before delivering the message from the Secretary-General, he said: “The international community will continue to support the Government in its national recovery and development efforts.”

Commemorating the Day, media practitioners and others discussed the role of the media in peace-building and development at a Monrovia symposium. More than 30 professionals from the media, government institutions and representatives of civil society reflected how the media can help promote Liberia's hard-won peace.

Seven Liberian children interacted in a video conference with counterparts at the UN headquarters in New York and peacekeeping missions in Kosovo and the Democratic Republic of Congo, sharing their thoughts about peace-building. And across the country, both Liberians and peacekeepers marked the Day by participating in clean-up projects, organizing free medical camps and workshops on peace, as well as sporting events and cultural shows.

During a special exhibition of Sitting Volleyball at the Sports Commission in downtown Monrovia, ecstatic crowds cheered as physically challenged children played while sitting on the floor with a low net. Liberian Volleyball Federation authorities said the game, first to be played in the country, would afford the opportunity to prepare for the global Para-Olympic games in which Liberia has never participated. The wife of US Ambassador to Liberia, Anita Booth, who witnessed the game, described it as “remarkable” as a contribution to peace.

At the stadium, UNMIL female colleagues played kickball, a local favourite, against the Liberian All Stars following a kick-off by UNMIL Chief of Public Information, Christine Koerner. In a spectacular performance, the UNMIL select side pulled from behind 8 - 2 to level the scores.

The most exciting game of the Day was a football match between the Christian Association of the Blind and the physically challenged from the Group of 77, a local organization, which was kicked off by DSRSG da Costa. The visually impaired electrified the field after they first scored against their opponents, who also worked very hard to equalize 1-1.

The games were funded by UNICEF working closely with Right to Play, an NGO, UNMIL and the Group of 77 to celebrate the Day and to demonstrate to Liberians that the UN respects every child’s right to play including the physically challenged and the visually impaired.

The international community will continue to support the Government in its national recovery and development efforts.”

Secretary-General Kofi Annan said during his recent visit to Liberia that this country, which was once at the centre of conflict in the sub-region, now serves as an example of what can be achieved when the leaders and the people of the country work together and are committed to peace.

In the months ahead, UNMIL will continue to provide security throughout the country to allow the Government the time it needs to push ahead with its plans for national recovery.

I would like to now take a few minutes to read to you United Nations Secretary-General Kofi Annan’s message on this Day.

Luiz Carlos da Costa
UNMIL Officer-in-Charge
The celebrations in Liberia marking the International Day of Peace culminated in a colourful cultural show that saw UNMIL peacekeepers and Liberian artists thrill thousands of spectators who had converged at the Antoinette Tubman stadium in Monrovia on 21 September. Among the spectators were Vice President Joseph Boakai, UNMIL OIC Luiz Carlos da Costa, Government Ministers, members of the diplomatic corps, UNMIL staff and a cross-section of the Liberian population. A soccer match between the visually impaired and the physically challenged, a kickball match and a symposium on the role of the media in conflict prevention were among the other events organized to mark the occasion. Seven Liberian school children participated in a live video conference linking UN headquarters in New York with the peacekeeping missions in Kosovo, the Democratic Republic of Congo and Liberia. DSRSG Jordan Ryan introduced the children, who had the opportunity to watch Secretary-General Kofi Annan opening the conference and to interact with children from other parts of the world. Cultural and sports events also took place in various Sectors marking this Day of Peace.