

SPECIAL COURT FOR SIERRA LEONE
PRESS AND PUBLIC AFFAIRS OFFICE

PRESS CLIPPINGS

Enclosed are clippings of the latest local and international press on the Special Court and related issues obtained by the Press and Public Affairs Office as of:

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The press clips are produced Monday to Friday.
If you are aware of omissions or have any comments or suggestions please contact
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IMATT commander ends tenure of office

Story: Theodora Renner

Brigadier David Santa Olalla, who took up office one year ago as International Military Advisory Training Team (IMATT) Commander and Military adviser to the government of Sierra Leone, says he is living the Sierra Leone, satisfied that both the administrative and operational tasks at the ministry and the RSLAF have

been shaped up in terms of standards.

He made this statement while bidding farewell to senior staff of the defense ministry and the Republic of Sierra Leone Armed Forces (RSLAF) during a farewell ceremony at the Myohaung Officers' Mess, Wilberforce Freetown.

"During my term of office there

were lots of issues that were to be addressed and which were systematically done," he says adding that he is happy that his home office and the people of this country appreciated his contribution towards the building up of the RSLAF.

References to the individual and collective training ongoing at the Armed Forces Center in Benguema were made which he said is moving in the right direction and in improving the standards of the RSLAF.

He assured that Britain would always be with Sierra Leone in its developmental strides for years to come noting that relations between the former and the latter have improved considerably.

Deputy Defense minister, Joe Blell, in his remarks says the IMATT Commander did his best during his period of office and described him as a well-decorated Military Officer with lots of high respect.

The Director general, A. R. Bayor described the outgoing Brigadier as a steadfast, diligent commander who handles things systematically to ensure that objectives are achieved and commended him for the manner he managed the administration of the civilian and the military staff.

CONCORD TIMES

December 21, 2005

"TRC report not useful without the recommendations"

Story: Tani Jalloh

Head of Human Rights Section of United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL), Benedict Sannoh Tuesday said the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) report is never useful without government adhering to recommendations therein.

He made this disclosure during the launching ceremony of the Secondary School version of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) report at the Grassroots Gender Empowerment Movement conference room on John Street.

"The report is of no use if recommendations therein are not met by the government," he said adding that UNAMSIL is associated with the activities of the TRC since its inception.

Giving an overview of the project which started in 2003. Media Consultant TRWG, Juliane Westphel noted they had a series of discussions and consultations with the people and the ministry of Education which culminated into the Secondary School version of the TRC report.

"This book is part of the dissemination of the findings and recommendations of TRC, reasons for the war and would further contribute to the establishment of the idea of human rights violations in the country," she pointed out.

Deputy Chief of Mission Truth and Reconciliation Working Group (TRWG). James Stewart said this is an opportunity for students to be asking for clear words because the future is not only in

their hands but should be in the heads and hearts.

Formerly launching the report. Education, Science and Technology minister, Dr. Alpha T Wurie outlined some of the causes of the war and the challenges now faced.

"The lack of quality systems and institutions some thirty years after independence is a cause. With only 8% of literacy rate in 1962 there was no way institutions could be properly managed," he said adding that nobody can contribute to nation building when he does not have the skills and professionalism.

"From 367,000 pupils enrolled in 1996 today we have 1.2 in primary schools yet quality has not been achieved. We need to build on the basics to get back our nationalistic pride," he said.

CONCORD TIMES
December 21, 2005

Amputees Urges Government For Packages

New Vision
21 Dec 05

By Joseph Bangura

Members of the Amputees and War Wounded Association in Sierra Leone have adopted a four-point resolution and given a three-month ultimatum to government with regards to the issue of reparation in accordance with the Truth and Reconciliation Commission Report (TRC).

The ultimatum was passed yesterday at the end of a one day consultative conference held at the National Stadium Hostel, where they adopted the following resolutions:-

1) To enquire about the content of the package offered them earlier on by Government.

2) To ask government to look into the issue of pension, War Victims funds and shelter.

3) To appoint a representative to the Sub-Committee at Cabinet, and

4) To Take the Truth and Reconciliation Commission report to Parliament and pass into law.

The National Chairman, Amputees and War Wounded Association, Alhaji Lamin Jusu Jarka, in his statement said that the reason for the conference was to deliberate on the outcome of the Regional Consultations and to dialogue with all stakeholders on the propose offer of assistance to their members.

Mr. Jarka said government had earlier promised to offer their children free education, health and shelter for all Amputees and War Wounded persons, but that is yet to become a reality.

He went further to say that the attorney General and Minister of Justice had written to the Association's executive, stating that the government had honoured some

of the recommendations in the TRC Report such as support to agriculture and the provision of free education and health care facilities.

The Executive Director, Forum of conscience Mr. John Caulker who is also the National Chairman for the TRC Working Group, is now working assiduously to see that the recommendations contained in the TRC Report become a reality.

Mr. Caulker said that there is need for continuous dialogue between the government, Amputees and War Wounded Association.

Representatives from the four regions also made contributions expressing some of their constraints and also talked about the welfare of their members.

NEW VISION
December 21, 2005

Unamsil deputy Force Commander bids farewell

Out-going Deputy UNAMSIL Force Commander, Brigadier General Opoku has officially taken leave of the Deputy Defence Minister, Joe C. Blell, the Chief of Defence Staff, Major General Sam M'boma and Staff of the Ministry of Defence as a result of the final withdrawal of the Mission's operation in Sierra Leone.

General Sam M'boma, while wishing Brigadier Opoku well in his new assignment, commended him for the good things he has done during his tenure of office making reference to assistance given to the RSLAF in its strides towards excellence.

Brigadier General Opoku, he said would be missed by Staff of the Defence Ministry more so while interacting during military ac-

tivities and celebrations, and expressed appreciation to the out-going Deputy Force Commander particularly for the facilities handed over to 3 Brigade of the RSLAF by UNAMSIL during their operations in Kenema.

Brigadier Opoku, in his remarks, thanked the CDS for the support and cooperation he has received from the Defence Ministry during their mission work in Sierra Leone and himself personally adding that he enjoyed all the working relations during his tenure of office.

The Ghanaian born Brigadier General said he is leaving but the cooperation will still continue on bilateral bases within the Sub-Region.

The Deputy Defence Minister,

Joe C. Blell described the out-going Deputy Force Commander, as an Officer who has proved his leadership quality and wished him well in his new assignment.

Though the task may be hectic at times, the Deputy Defence Minister said, Brigadier Opoku's tenure at UNAMSIL would help him greatly, while discharging his next responsibility.

Brigadier General Opoku, who was accompanied by Lt. Col. Steve Koku Assem, UNAMSIL's Chief Liaison Officer, said he has made lots of friends in this country while performing his duty adding that he would miss them including the natural beauty of Sierra Leone.

In terms of military training, he said the Ghana Armed Force would do its best to ensure that the training of both junior and senior officers of the RSLAF is a priority.

COME TO THE PEOPLE!

-Says Mwakawago

UNAMSIL HEAD, Daudi Mwakawago said he hopes the equipment and other facilities Unamsil is leaving behind to the government will discharge its duties and responsibilities to the people."

The SRSG, who was

by
JOHN B. SESSAY

speaking during the handing over of the equipment at Hastings last week, said the facilities were donated in line with the UN General Assembly Resolution and that it was a mark of gratitude to the government and people of Sierra Leone.

The handing over of 758 communication equipment and 25 vehicles to the government of Sierra Leone is another milestone achieved by Unamsil in consolidating the peace in Sierra Leone.

It is also another demonstration that Unamsil has accomplished its peace-keeping role in the country as the draw down process



PRESIDENT KABBAH: grateful to Unamsil is now almost complete," he said.

Ambassador Mwakawago said other facilities handed over included the Lassa Fever Diagnostic Laboratory at the Kenema Government Hospital, and also part of the Unamsil base at Hastings.

President Kabbah thanked the departing UN

mission for what he referred to as a job well done for ushering peace in the country.

"With the total pull out of Unamsil, there will be lots of foreign investors, who were reluctant to come because of the large contingent of peacekeepers in the country," he said.

FOR DI PEOPLE

December 21, 2005

Thank You!

WE IN the diaspora supporting a Positive Democratic Change, for the love of our Beloved Country Sierra Leone and its nationals, do applaud with great appreciation and Our Highest Consideration, the Concerns expressed by the Embassy of France, Embassy of the United States of America, The British High Commissioner and the Delegation of the European Commission regarding the arrest of Charles Francis Margai, Leader of the unregistered Peoples' Movement for Democratic Change (PMDC) and some of his supporters on Wednesday 7th December.

This unprecedented action to a man with massive support in and out of Sierra Leone with his supporters in the process of forming a political party to run for the 2007 Presidential elections is bound to heighten political tension in the country thus threatening Peace, Stability and the national security as a whole. Your concerns are a show of solidarity for the promotion of World Peace and Democracy. On the whole neither opposition leader nor supporters should be subject to such treatment in this democratic 21st century era.

There is little doubt that the arrest of Charles Margai is clearly an orchestrated plot to eliminate him one way or the other so that he does not run for the 2007 Presidential elections and in

the process frustrate his supporters.

This must not happen in a country that professes democracy and that has just been delivered from many years of brutal war which scars are still raw and visible caused by greed and similar actions. The onus is now on the SLPP government to desist from using unnecessary force on political opponents and to create and tolerate a democratic atmosphere for all parties to campaign lawfully and freely in preparation for the free and fair elections in 2007.

Supporters of the PMDC would like to urge the government of Sierra Leone to invent no delay tactics in the proceedings with the case against Charles Margai and others but to process the cases in honesty and trans-

parency for a quick resolve.

There is no doubt in our minds that Charles Francis Margai and his supporters are law abiding citizens and will do everything within their rights to maintain that.

Governments come and go, political parties will fade away even people die and become history, but Sierra Leone will be there decade after decade. Let us put Sierra Leone first in preparation for future proud and successful generations to come. We hold you in High Esteem.
Agnes K Macquley -
Chair Margai Campaign Group On Behalf of PMDC -
supporters of Good Governance and Democracy for Sierra Leone
-London.

For DI PEOPLE

December 21, 2005

SOCIETY WATCH

By Augusta Brimah and TDS

A research study recently facilitated by the Talking Drum Studio about the issue of child sexual abuse and exploitation in Bo has commenced as it became clear that during the war, over 5,000 girls were abducted and raped by the various fighting forces in the Bo District.

The campaign was launched to examine and identify the incidence of sexual abuse that takes place in the homes, communities, villages in the Bo District. The issue of prostitution was also researched on as it has become clear that prostitution is now the order of the day in Bo town with special reference to child prostitution that is on the increase and becoming a social problem.

It was discovered that most teenage girls in Bo town hang around nightclubs, hotels and other brothels for men just for commercial sex purposes. Prostitution and other sexual exploitation and the issue of drug abuse have resulted to the increase in crime rates in Bo especially among teenage girls and this has resulted to most of them being rounded up by police and detained in the police cells.

Some of these teenage girls who most times could not face the harsh conditions of police cells perished in those police detention centers. Some of the main factors related to child prostitution and sexual exploitation have been attributed to the overused word, poverty.

The research findings pointed out child prostitution and sexual exploitation thrive in an environment of misery, squalor and poverty. It was revealed that a 10-year minor

Child Exploitation Rampant In Bo

Salone Times
Room
No. of

was sexually fidgeted by a 45-year-old man for "a plate of rice and a bottle of Vimto."

The parents of the minor were reported to have compromised with the culprit at the expense of the child who had lost her chastity.

The findings about teenage pregnancy were also highlighted and that a 13 year old pupil whose plight came into focus was discussed.

The 13-year pupil was reported to be a teenage mother after her parents later consented that the culprit should pay the bride price to them.

The research also pointed out that some family heads could not provide basic amenities such as food, shelter, clothing including proper medical facilities to members of their households and this has been compounded by indiscriminate poverty as a result of the war in that part of the country.

Secondly, the issue of "shattered or disintegrated homes" was further perused at as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights clearly spelt out the rights of the child and the psychological development of the child in the society.

The research also deliberated on the issue of safe motherhood, as well as healthy child care practices by parents and it was observed that such practices had dwindled as a result of marital problems.

A ten-year minor, from one of these disintegrated homes was raped at Sembahun 17 and is now suffering from fistula.

The research findings also discovered that child's rights have been abused as a result of blatant exploitation by the parents, authorities putting at risk in the community.

It was reported that most of the children are now being trafficked to war torn Liberia to be engaged in menial jobs and to serve as commercial sexual workers. Child sexual exploitation leads to abuse with their concomitant effects that result to teenage pregnancy and early marriage including high rate of school dropouts in the country.

At Jimmy Bagbo, in the Bo District, a primary school teacher was reported to have sexually abused four of his pupils and that the authorities have not punished him for an act.

It was also reported that a 21-year-old man forced and raped a 65-year old grandmother along a nearby stream.

An adolescent also abused a 5-year old girl child by penetrating the anus of the minor.

The Sierra Leone Council of Churches, Family Support Unit, Social Welfare, and Women's Forum, CPU and other child related organizations are working relentlessly to ensure that perpetrators involved in sexual assaults and exploitations are prosecuted.

Task force meetings have been organized in order to promote and sensitize children's activities in the schools, community and the homes.

The constant radio sensitization programmes are also very vital in this direction.

The constraints faced by these Human Rights groups and NGOs in tackling this menace include the need to cater for rape survivors whilst investigations are being conducted, as several cases have been reported at the Bo Government Hospital.

There is also the need to criminalize child related offences so as to punish perpetrators. The need to cater for child prostitutes is top in the agenda.

Salone Times
December 21, 2005

'Why Margai Case Should Be Heard In High Court'

Times
By Umaru Sannoh
Interim leader of the Peoples Movement for Democratic Change (PMDC), Chalers Margai and ten others made their second appearance at the Bo Magistrate Court No. 1 yesterday with Principal State Counsel Monfred Sesay making a case for the matter to be referred to a Superior Court as there are provisions in Section 10B of

the Criminal Procedure Code for that purpose. This, he said is a legal procedure of transferring cases from one court to another.
The matter was handed over by Magistrate Deen Tarawallie.
Charles Margai, Arrow John Bockari and Aggrey Albert Aruna (all lawyers) represented themselves at the trial.

The other accused persons: Mohamed Borbor Sannoh; Lamin Vonjo Ngobeh, Edward Joe Kamanda Bongay and Rachael Lagawo were represented by lawyer A nsu Lansana. Bubuakei Jabbe represented Mamie Bockarie. Rachel Lagawo and Sidikie Janneh.
Lawyer Bubuakei Jabbe made an application for the pre-

SEE PAGE 3

Margai Case Adjourned

siding Magistrate to mid February and ends after six weeks.
The Presiding Magistrate Deen Tarawallie, however, adjourned the case to 5th February next year.
Meanwhile, the Le500m bail for the eleven accused persons still stands.

SALON F TIMES

December 21, 2005

...and no STATE WITNESSES TO PROSECUTE Margai

Samba Sheku Samba questioned the absence of state witnesses for two preliminary hearings. First accused Lawyer Charles Margai at the Bo Charles Magistrate Court No.1 representing himself said it is vital that witnesses of the state are made to appear in court for possible cross-examination.



Margai

examination before transferring the matter to Freetown. The prosecution was not fully represented by state counsels due to lack of communication with other state counsels in Freetown, explained the only state counsel

present court, Lawyer Monfred Sesay. Lawyer Monfred Sesay therefore applied to the court to transfer the case to Freetown. Arrow John Bockarie, one of the accused persons and himself a lawyer stressed on the exigency of time, that it is expected of the prosecution to be ready once a charge is read in court.

EVENING SCOOP
December 21, 2005

UNAMSIL News Digest 21 December 2005

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SIERRA LEONE

UN Council told of remarkable turnaround in Sierra Leone-*UN newscentre*

In his final briefing to the Security Council on Sierra Leone yesterday, the top United Nations envoy that country said that the rebirth from the horrors of civil war is continuing, long with a growing sense of stability and an improvement of basic services, though international security assistance is still needed.

“Today will close the final chapter about a country that has gradually risen from the ruins of a devastating decade-long conflict and undergone a remarkable turnaround, and that now is heading towards a future filled with hope and the promise of a better life for its population,” Daudi Ngelautwa Mwakawago, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Sierra Leone, told the council.

The troop withdrawal of the UN Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL) was also expected to be completed yesterday, he said, while the present 33 UN police details were to be scaled down to 10 by the end of December.

A smaller team chosen from that group of officers will stay temporarily in Freetown to facilitate the transition to the new UN interim office.

Mr. Mwakawago said there is no major threat on the horizon to internal or external security. Nonetheless, border security patrols continue to guard against any unforeseen mishaps that may occur.

The Secretary-General’s efforts to mobilize support for strengthening Sierra Leone’s armed forces has elicited positive responses from several countries, he said. However, there are still large funding gaps in meeting security-sector running costs and in the acquisition of transport assets, especially support services, communications equipment and adequate accommodation.

As the 2007 elections draws near, he said it is very likely that both inter-and intra-party rivalry will intensify, but the vibrant political interaction among Sierra Leoneans is a welcome change.

UNAMSIL has initiated a series of programmes designed to promote inter-party dialogue, as well as reconciliation and tolerance among the political parties.

In his final report on the mission before the Council, Secretary-General Kofi Annan said he viewed UNAMSIL's accomplishments "with a deep sense of satisfaction."

"The trials and tribulations faced by the mission during the crisis of 2000, the measures taken to reverse its fortunes, and its achievements between 2001 and today, are indeed remarkable," Mr. Annan said in his last report to the Security Council on UNAMSIL, referring to mission's recovery from the resurgence of violence in the country in which UN headquarters in Freetown were overrun and destroyed.

First Post-War Countrywide Survey Shows 1.5 Percent HIV Prevalence-*Allafrica*

The first nationwide HIV/AIDS survey carried out in Sierra Leone since the end of its 11-year war shows a relatively low prevalence rate of 1.5 percent, according to the head of the National AIDS Secretariat, Brima Kargbo.

Prevalence in Sierra Leone previously had been estimated at 0.9 percent on the basis of a 2002 survey touching on only a part of the country of five million people. Activists had reckoned prevalence to be as high as five per cent in the capital, Freetown.

The latest study, carried out by Ghanaian laboratory Nimba Research Consultancy and financed by the World Bank, involved a sample 3.5 times larger than the previous one, with 8,346 people volunteering to take blood tests - 58 per cent of them women.

It showed a 2.1 prevalence rate in urban areas and 1.3 percent in the countryside. Unlike other West African nations, where women are twice as vulnerable as men, there was little difference in the infection rate between men and women, at 1.5 and 1.6 percent respectively.

The study showed that only 10 percent of people use condoms.

The National AIDS Secretariat also hopes to expand the network of counselling and testing centres, currently at five in the capital and one in each of the country's 12 districts.

The Global Fund To Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria in May pledged US \$8.5 million over the next two years to shore up prevention programmes and help provide antiretroviral drugs (ARVs). The World Bank for its part has been involved since 2002 in a US \$15 million scheme to battle HIV/AIDS.

Less than 300 of the 7,000 people who require ARVs are receiving the drugs in four centres in Sierra Leone, but Kargbo said 4,000 people are expected to be on the treatment next year thanks to help from the government and its international partners.

Rift in opposition APC party to end-*Allafrica*

Second complainant in the All Peoples Congress (APC) perjury trial Mohamed Jalloh Monday made a dramatic and unexpected statement at the magistrate court number three

discharging all the accused persons stating that he will not want to go down in history as been a party to a group bent on destroying the APC.

Jalloh when quizzed by Magistrate Shyllon whether the statement should be recorded reaffirmed his position.

"In the interest of the country, in the interest of democracy and in the interest of the APC, from this moment onwards, I disengage and withdraw my complaints against all the accused persons," he said.

Out of the courtroom, Jalloh hugged leader of the APC, Ernest Koroma and other defendants in the matter before the court in a rather emotional manner.

"From this day onwards, I am going to support the will of the majority members of APC," he said.

Commenting about the dramatic development, the APC have welcomed the move, as Jalloh is a senior member of the party. Many APC supporters see the development as a sign of good things to come.

It could be recalled that Ernest Koroma, Victor Foh, Sani Sesay, Osman Yansanneh and some others were facing perjury charges brought against them at a Freetown Magistrate court.

Christmas disaster averted....Crippled Bellview Jetliner packed with holidaymakers makes emergency landing in Accra-Cocorioko

What could have been a Christmas holiday disaster of monumental proportions was averted on Monday when a Bellview jetliner packed with holidaymakers, heading for Freetown from Nigeria, made an emergency landing at the Kotoka International Airport in Accra.

The plane made a precarious landing , with a tire burst , after it experienced hydraulic system failure at midair and wobbled for about a mile before it stopped , blocking the runway and causing a 45-minute emergency closure of the airport.

LIBERIA

'Work for a Great Nation', Ellen Rallies Liberians' Support, Gets Goodwill Pledges from Int'l Community-*Allafrica*

It was an historical occasion marked by witty speeches that deliberately forecast the future. Amongst them is the statement by the President-elect calling for national effort for a vibrant nation building.

The National Elections Commission (NEC) Monday certificated winners of the October 11 and November 8 run-off elections at an elaborate program held at the Centennial Pavilion.

The exercise was characterized by what observers called "voices of purpose" from special representatives of ECOWAS, AU, and UN.

Amongst the speakers were U.S. Ambassador Donald Booth, NTGL Chairman Charles Gyude Bryant, and ICGL Representative Kwame Awua Amoa, and President-elect Madam Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf.

In his remarks minutes after the certification aspect of the program ended, the head of the United Nations in Liberia (UNMIL) Alan Doss called on members of the in-coming legislature to rise above "partisan politics and narrow interest" and put the welfare of the nation in the first place.

He said as the men and women of the legislature take responsibility next year, they will have the full support of the United Nations and other international partners to enable them address the many difficulties and complex tasks ahead.

"The international community stands by the people of Liberia in providing peace and stability to the nation plagued by conflict," he said, adding, "the United Nations will be by your side to consolidate the foundation of the democratic governance and to ensure enduring peace and towering prosperity."

Also making remarks, Ambassador Booth said the certification exercise marked an "important milestone to a long project" intended to usher in new government administration in 2006.

"On October 11 and again November 8, Liberians demonstrated their passion for peace and democracy. The people of Liberia have shown that all Liberians have won these elections and ready to embrace democratic tenets," the US envoy said, adding that he looked forward to working with new leaders in moving the country forward.

For her part, President-elect, Madam Ellen Johnson Sirleaf began by thanking God for where Liberians find themselves, saying that had it not been for God, they would not have seen the progress made.

Apart from that, she also thanked the Liberian for people for the elections, noting that the "victory of these elections is a victory for the Liberian people."

"We all listened to the applause worldwide and we are saddened that the silent majority cannot take this victory and celebrate because of the unfortunate challenge to the elections results," she said.

The president-elect then called on Liberians to join her in the effort of national building, adding, "It is time for all Liberians to join this team to make the nation great after years of war and suffering."

"Our mandate is to reconcile and unify the Liberian people, giving equal opportunity and social equity to all. Our mandate is to ensure honesty and efficiency, to make public service what it is meant to be and not a place for the accumulation of personal wealth but a place to serve a people," the President-elect said.

AFRICA

Lake Nyos Puts 300,000 Lives in Danger-*Allafrica*

About 300,000 lives are in danger following the imminent explosion of Lake Nyos even as the National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA) started a sensitization programme to save the situation.

The NEMA sensitization which will take its officials to Anambra, Cross River and Taraba states is to prepare people both physically and psychologically for the dangers ahead.

Daily Champion gathered from officials of the Adamawa State Ministry of Special Duties in Yola that the sensitization and public enlightenment programme will be done in conjunction with the affected states.

Daily Champion also gathered that the public enlightenment programme follows the report of a United Nations Environmental Protection Agency study which revealed that the lake located in North West Cameroon will collapse any moment from now.

The report has also heightened fear of mass death from the carbondioxide emission from the collapsing lake.

The report signed by Rene Nijenhuis and dated 17th October, 2005 indicated that "a breach of the natural dam in lake Nyos is imminent with a high likelihood to occur at any moment."

The UN group has however recommended mitigation project which will include pumping of the water from the deeper levels of the lake containing high concentration of carbondioxide, after which the dam walls can be removed using explosives.

The survey report has been made available to the Nigerian and Cameroonian governments to take pro-active measures to reduce the devastating effect of the disaster on the people located along the danger zone.

Members of the House of Representatives Committee on Disaster management control had earlier visited Adamawa and other affected state governments to alert them on the dangers ahead.

The lake first erupted in 1986, killing more than 20,000 persons.

WORLD

UN establishes new body to prevent countries from sliding back into war-UN newscentre

In an historic action that brings to fruition a central reform proposed by United Nations Secretary-General Kofi Annan and the 2005 World Summit, the Security Council and the General Assembly yesterday acted in concert to establish a new body that aims to prevent countries emerging from conflict from falling back into chaos.

“That word, historic, is often over-used, but in this case, I have no doubt that it is merited,” the President of the 60th General Assembly, Jan Eliasson of Sweden, said in introducing the resolution that established the 31-member Peacebuilding Commission.

“This resolution would, for the first time in the history of the United Nations, create a mechanism which ensures that for countries emerging from conflict, post-conflict does not mean post-engagement of the international community,” he said.

Around 50 per cent of the conflicts of the past 20 years have recurred within five years of peace agreements, Mr. Eliasson added at a press conference after the resolutions’ adoption.

“When the cameras disappear, the attention also disappears and five years later you pay an enormously heavy price, and people pay a very heavy price. This is what we are trying to repair when we fill this institutional gap,” he said.

Today’s resolutions defined the new Commission as an intergovernmental advisory body that will make sure attention is maintained on the countries in question, setting its agenda at the request of the Security Council, the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), the Secretary-General, or Member States on the “verge of lapsing or relapsing into conflict.”

According to the resolutions, the Commission will act only by consensus, proposing integrated strategies for stabilization, economic recovery and development, and providing recommendations for improving the coordination of the UN system in those efforts.

The establishment of the Commission fulfills a key outcome of the 2005 Summit in New York, which committed Member States to creating it by the end of this year. It comes just about a week after the first major Summit reform was enacted by the creation of the

Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF) that will keep cash at hand for saving lives in sudden-onset emergencies.

Among other priorities of that Summit were a new Human Rights Council, also due around year's end, and a comprehensive convention on terrorism to be completed during the current session of the Assembly, which ends on 30 September 2006.

All three issues have undergone intense and protracted negotiations. In regard to the Peacebuilding Commission, Mr. Eliasson said the most contentious issues were reporting lines and membership.

Today's resolutions prescribed that membership will consist of seven Security Council members, including permanent members, selected by the Council; seven members of ECOSOC elected from regional groups, five top contributors to UN budgets, funds, programmes and agencies; and five top providers of military personnel and civilian police to United Nations missions.

The General Assembly would elect seven additional members, with special consideration for States that have experienced post-conflict recovery.

Thanking Mr. Eliasson for his hard work bringing about consensus on the new Commission, Secretary-General Annan stressed that more hard work lies ahead in making sure the Commission functions properly, "if it is truly to make a difference, not in these halls but in the countries where its help is needed."

"In short," he said in a statement released today, "it is vital that the momentum of this reform is sustained. But right now, we have real reason to be satisfied."