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Synopsis

Ten years after the horrific rebel attack of 6 January 1999 and the battle for Freetown, Sierra Leone is a country at peace. A president from the opposition party in the immediate post-war period, Ernest Bai Koroma, is in power since the September 2007 elections. The elections were organised by the National Electoral Commission (NEC) with broad citizen support and assistance from the United Nations Integrated Office in Sierra Leone (UNIOSIL), which succeeded the then largest UN peacekeeping operation in the world, the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL). In 2009, the country is still on the agenda of the Security Council and hosts the United Nations Integrated Peacebuilding Office in Sierra Leone (UNIPSIL).

Sierra Leoneans interviewed in November 2008 recognised UNAMSIL's significant contribution to their country's recovery from collapse and generalised violence. They insisted on the conjunction of efforts by key players in helping to bring an end to the conflict: Nigeria and Guinea, bilaterally and as participants in a regional peacekeeping force; the United Kingdom (UK) through direct support to the Sierra Leonean army; and UNAMSIL. The quasi collapse of UNAMSIL in May 2000 remained vivid in their memories, but so did its progressive recovery since 2001. Ultimately, UNAMSIL achieved the key tasks assigned to it by the Security Council: it assisted in conducting the disarmament, demobilisation and to some extent the reintegration of former combatants; supported the redeployment of the state throughout the country; provided key assistance and security to national and local elections; contributed to the reform of the Sierra Leone police; supported the Truth and Reconciliation Commission; and provided security for the Special Court for Sierra Leone. Its record in implementing resolution 1325 (2000) on women, peace and security was much less impressive.

I. Conflict history

Civil war in Sierra Leone began in March 1991, when an armed group known as the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) headed by former Corporal Foday Sankoh entered the country from Liberia to launch a rebellion against Joseph Momoh's government of the All Peoples Congress (APC), in power since 1967 and with a poor record in terms of economic development, political freedom and resource management. The rebellion quickly developed into a campaign of violence and looting of the country's diamond and mineral wealth. Sierra Leone was plunged into a maelstrom of instability.

In 1992, a group of young military officers led by Captain Valentine Strasser staged a coup which sent Momoh into exile in Guinea and established the National Provisional Ruling Council (NPRC) as the ruling authority in Sierra Leone. Strasser was in turn overthrown in 1996 by his deputy. An exploratory mission sent to the country in 1994 by the UN Secretary-General reported that, as a result of the then three-year old conflict, about 10 per cent of the population had fled to neighbouring countries (mostly Guinea) and at least 30 per cent were internally displaced. Vital infrastructure had been destroyed and three quarters of the national budget was injected into defence.

In 1995 the Secretary-General appointed a special envoy.¹ He worked in collaboration with the Organisation of African Unity (OAU), the ancestor of the African Union (AU), and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) to seek a settlement that could return the country to civilian rule. International pressure on the military junta and the determination of a group of Sierra Leoneans from civil society led to multiparty elections in February 1996. The army handed power over to the winner, Alhaji Ahmad Tejan Kabbah, of the Sierra Leone People's Party (SLPP). The RUF had opposed the elections and done everything to prevent citizens from casting their votes, including committing horrendous atrocities. The new government was nationally and internationally recognised, but the conflict continued.

The special envoy assisted in negotiating an agreement between the government and RUF, known as the Abidjan Accord, in late 1996. But resentment at the elected government mounted within the Sierra Leonean army (SLA). A group of officers accused Kabbah of giving more resources to a network of civilian militias, the Civil Defence Forces (CDF) – the most powerful of which were the Kamajors – to fight the RUF, instead of relying on the army. In May 1997, SLA rebels known as the Armed Forces Revolutionary Council (AFRC), led by Major Johnny Paul Koroma, overthrew the president, forcing him into exile in Guinea, and invited the RUF to join the government. The new administration was characterised by a total absence of the rule of law – violence, rape and looting were widespread.

¹ Berhanu Dinka from Ethiopia.

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A new Secretary-General special envoy² and other representatives of the international community tried unsuccessfully to put pressure on the ruling junta to step down. The Security Council imposed an oil and arms embargo and authorised ECOWAS to ensure its implementation using the Economic Community of West African States Monitoring Group (ECOMOG), deployed in Sierra Leone to protect the government. Resolution 1132 of 8 October 1997, the first of the Council on the situation in Sierra Leone, acting under Chapter VII, demanded that the junta 'relinquish power and make way for the restoration of the democratically elected government' and decided that 'all States [should] prevent the entry into or transit through their territories of members of the military junta and adult members of their families'; and imposed an arms and oil embargo on Sierra Leone.³

In March 1998 ECOMOG ousted the AFRC junta and reinstated President Kabbah's government. The Security Council lifted prohibitions on the supply of oil but maintained the arms embargo. In July 1998, it established the United Nations Observer Mission in Sierra Leone (UNOMSIL) to monitor and advise on efforts to disarm combatants and restructure the nation's security forces. In January 1999, AFRC and RUF fighters infiltrated and overran most of Freetown. Atrocities committed against civilians included rape, random amputations of men, women and children, and kidnapping.⁴ After almost three weeks of fighting, ECOMOG ousted the rebels. Three thousand people are believed to have been murdered or abducted and many hundreds mutilated. All UNOMSIL personnel were evacuated, mainly to Guinea. While the rebels failed to take Freetown, they controlled large parts of the territory and showed their capacity of devastation.

With the assistance of West African heads of state and other dignitaries from the UK, the United States (US), OAU and the UN, the president, the RUF leader and his AFRC allies signed the Lomé Peace Agreement on 7 July 1999, giving Sankoh the status of vice-president and other positions in the government to the RUF. The accord called for a neutral international peacekeeping force to help with implementation, beginning with the disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration process (DDR). The Security Council terminated UNOMSIL and established the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL) in October 1999, with an initial force of 6,000 personnel. ECOMOG left in April 2000, but some contingents were retained and 'rehatted' under UNAMSIL.

The war in Sierra Leone saw the intervention of foreign governments and mercenary forces, which generally provided support in exchange for lucrative contracts and mining concessions. Charles Taylor's rebels, the National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL), responsible for the armed conflict that broke out in Liberia in 1989, inaugurating the cycle of devastating civil wars in the Mano River region, and Taylor's government from July 1997 to 2003, backed the RUF with training, personnel, logistics, weapons and initial funding. After his forced departure from power in 2003 and exile in Nigeria, Taylor was arrested and has been facing trial before the Special Court for Sierra Leone for war crimes and crimes against

² Francis Okelo from Uganda.

³ United Nations Security Council resolution 1132 of 8 October 1997.

⁴ For a detailed account of the atrocities committed during the occupation of Freetown by the AFRC and RUF and the fighting with ECOMOG force, see 'Getting Away with Murder, Mutilation, and Rape: New Testimony from Sierra Leone', *Human Rights Watch Report* 11, 3 June 1999.

humanity committed by the RUF. There was considerable diplomatic activity among parties interested in bringing the conflict to an end: the OAU, ECOWAS, ECOMOG troop-contributors (Nigeria, Guinea, Ghana, and Mali), the UK, the US and the UN.

Access to alluvial diamonds, the war in Liberia and the ambitions of warlord-turned-president Charles Taylor in the Mano River region, as well as lack of interest from the world powers, played a role in the outbreak and duration of the civil war. But the political, economic and societal failures of governments since independence created the conditions for violence, instability and state collapse. The report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC), which provides a comprehensive account of the civil war, recognises its root causes and calls for profound reforms. The United Nations Integrated Office in Sierra Leone (UNIOSIL) replaced UNAMSIL in January 2006 to assist the government in consolidating the achievements of UNAMSIL and addressing post-conflict security, political and reconstruction challenges. In 2009, Sierra Leone remains a testing ground for new forms of UN engagement as one of the first countries to benefit from the Peacebuilding Commission (PBC).⁵ Since October 2008 the country hosts the United Nations Integrated Peacebuilding Office (UNIPSIL).

II. Mandate and evolution

UNAMSIL was established to replace the prior observer mission, UNOMSIL, by resolution 1270 of 22 October 1999 after the Lomé Peace Agreement. More resolutions would follow as reactions to the deterioration of security in early 2000 and the need to play a key role in disarmament, the deployment of national security forces throughout the country and the organisation of credible elections.

I. The initial mandate

Security Council resolution 1270 of 22 October 1999 gave UNAMSIL the following main tasks:

- To cooperate with the government and other parties to the Lomé Agreement in its implementation;
- To assist the government in the disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration plan, establishing a presence at key locations;

⁵ The Peacebuilding Commission was created by resolution 60/180 of the United Nations General Assembly and Security Council resolution 1645 of 20 December 2005.

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- To ensure the security and freedom of movement of UN personnel;
- To monitor adherence to the ceasefire in accordance with the agreement of 18 May 1999;
- To facilitate the delivery of humanitarian assistance;
- To provide support to the elections.

Resolution 1270 (1999), *inter alia*, also:

- Decided that the military component of UNAMSIL should have a maximum of 6,000 personnel;
- Commended ECOMOG's readiness to provide security for the areas where it was located, in particular around Freetown and Lungi, and protection for the government, and to proceed with disarmament and demobilisation in conjunction and full coordination with UNAMSIL;
- Stressed the need for close cooperation and coordination between ECOMOG and UNAMSIL and welcomed the intended establishment of joint operations centres;
- Acting under Chapter VII of the UN Charter, decided that UNAMSIL may take the necessary action to ensure the security and freedom of movement of its personnel and, within its capabilities and areas of deployment, to afford protection to civilians under imminent threat of physical violence, taking into account the responsibilities of the government and ECOMOG;
- Underlined the key role of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission and urged the Government of Sierra Leone to ensure its prompt establishment;
- Urged the government to expedite the formation of professional and accountable national police and armed forces.

For the first time a peacekeeping operation was mandated to protect civilians. The limitations to comply were also made clear: such protection would depend on the capabilities and deployment in the areas where civilians faced an imminent threat. The mandate is linked to the functions of the regional force on the ground, ECOMOG. It prescribes close cooperation and coordination with ECOMOG, which will continue to 'provide security for the areas where it is currently located' and proceed with disarmament and demobilisation 'in conjunction and full coordination with UNAMSIL'. ECOMOG's withdrawal was not considered in the writing of the resolution and not factored into UNAMSIL's preparation for deployment. To be noted finally is UNAMSIL's limited mandate related to a ceasefire between belligerents supposed to be at peace following the Lomé Agreement. UNAMSIL was to 'monitor adherence to the ceasefire'. It was not asked to prevent violations or stop them by using means such as military force.

2. Revisions of the mandate and strength of UNAMSIL from 2000 to 2001

The year 2000 saw intensive activity from the UN Secretariat and the Council on Sierra Leone, as the newly created UNAMSIL faced enormous difficulties from its very early stages. The Council voted six resolutions on the situation in Sierra Leone in the course of that year; four of them focusing on UNAMSIL's mandate and strength adjustments, two on non-military measures to influence the parties – ban on diamonds exports; strengthened arms embargo – and a request to create a Special Court to deal with the perpetrators of certain crimes in the course of the conflict.

Reacting to the sudden withdrawal of ECOMOG: Additional tasks for UNAMSIL by resolution 1289 (2000)

The Council, by resolution 1289 of 7 February 2000, *inter alia*:

- Noted that the peace process had thus far been marred by limited participation in the DDR programme, lack of progress on the release of abductees and child soldiers, hostage-taking and attacks on humanitarian personnel;
- Noted continuing human rights violations against the civilian population and emphasised that the amnesty extended under the peace agreement did not extend to such violations committed after the date of its signing;
- Took note of the decision of the governments of Nigeria, Guinea and Ghana to withdraw their remaining ECOMOG contingents;⁶
- Decided that UNAMSIL's military component should be expanded to a maximum of 11,100 personnel.

The resolution also revised the mandate of UNAMSIL to include the following tasks:

- To provide security at key locations and government buildings, in particular in Freetown, important intersections and major airports, including the Lungi airport;
- To facilitate the free flow of people, goods and humanitarian assistance along specified thoroughfares;
- To provide security for disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration;

⁶ Letter of the Secretary-General to the President of the Security Council, S/1999/1285, 23 December 1999.

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- To coordinate with and assist the Sierra Leone law enforcement authorities;
- To guard weapons, ammunition and other military equipment collected from ex-combatants and to assist in their subsequent disposal or destruction.

This resolution was the Council's response to two important developments: the violation of the peace agreement and ECOMOG's full withdrawal. Both required UNAMSIL to have a larger mandate than previously thought, taking primary responsibility for security of the DDR programme, in a context where some of the parties to the agreement showed hostility to the peacekeeping force.

In February 2000, it was obvious that UNAMSIL would not be a smooth operation, easily collecting weapons from disciplined ex-combatants and progressively transferring responsibilities to the national institutions after the holding of elections. In the wording of the resolution, the additional tasks in the area of security demanded an increase of the authorised military strength to 11,100 personnel.

From May 2000 to mid-2001, UNAMSIL under stress: Rapid reinforcement and mandate adjustments

The Council voted a new resolution on 19 May 2000 following a serious setback marked by attacks on UNAMSIL and hostage-taking of hundreds of UN peacekeepers by the RUF. Resolution 1299 (2000):

- Decided that UNAMSIL's military component should be expanded to 13,000 personnel;
- Acting under Chapter VII, decided that the restrictions on the sale or supply of arms and related materiel did not apply for the sole use in Sierra Leone of those member states cooperating with UNAMSIL and the Government of Sierra Leone.

On 4 August 2000, resolution 1313, admitting UNAMSIL's 'serious weaknesses', *inter alia*:

- Considered that 'the widespread and serious violations' of the Lomé Agreement constituted 'a breakdown of the prior generally permissive environment based on the Agreement and predicated on the cooperation of the parties'; and considered that there would continue to be a threat to UNAMSIL and the security of the state. To counter that threat, 'the structure, capability, resources and mandate of UNAMSIL [required] appropriate strengthening';
- Expressed its intention to strengthen the mandate with the following priority tasks: (a) to maintain the security of the Lungj and Freetown peninsulas and their major approach routes; (b) to deter and decisively counter the threat of RUF attacks by responding robustly to any hostile actions or threat of imminent and direct use of force; (c) to deploy progressively in a coherent operational structure and in sufficient numbers and density at key strategic locations and main population centres and to assist the government's efforts to extend state authority, restore law and order and further stabilise the situation progressively, and, within its capabilities and areas of deployment, to afford protection to civilians under threat of imminent physical violence; (d) to patrol actively on strategic lines of communication, to ensure freedom of movement and to facilitate the provision of humanitarian assistance; (e) to assist in the promotion of the political process leading, *inter alia*, to a renewed disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration programme where possible;

- Considered that UNAMSIL should be reinforced through accelerated troop rotations, aviation and maritime assets, a strengthened force reserve, upgraded communications and specialist combat and logistic support assets;
- Recognised that the RUF offensive against UNAMSIL since May 2000 revealed serious inherent weaknesses in the mission's structure, command and control and resources, as reflected in the assessment mission's findings, welcomed the recommendations made on that basis and requested the Secretary-General to take urgent steps to implement them;
- Stressed that the successful achievement of the objectives of the mission would depend on the provision to UNAMSIL of fully equipped, complete units, with the required capabilities, effective command and control structure and capacity, a single chain of command, adequate resources and the commitment to implement the mandate of the mission in full.

Resolution 1313 (2000) explicitly recognised the serious weaknesses of UNAMSIL and detailed the areas where quick progress had to be made. It expressed the willingness to see a more robust military response to attacks from restive parties. The order of priorities was clear: restoring security and promoting a political process to resume the DDR programme.

On 22 December 2000, Security Council resolution 1334 took note of the new ceasefire agreement signed in Abuja on 10 November 2000 and recalled UNAMSIL's objectives. The Council highlighted the need to improve the mission through the 'appropriate strengthening of the structure, capability, resources and mandate'.⁷ Another resolution was approved on 13 March 2001 (1346), which increased UNAMSIL's military strength to 17,500 personnel, welcomed a new concept of operations and called for a lasting settlement of the crisis in the Mano River Union. UNAMSIL's authorised military strength actually grew almost threefold in 15 months. In 2001, it had become the largest peacekeeping operation worldwide.

3. Beyond military measures in 2000-2001: Resolutions on arms, diamonds and a Special Court

The arms embargo proved ineffective in stopping hostilities, which continued despite the Lomé Agreement. After the attacks on UNAMSIL and the refusal of RUF and AFRC rebels to disarm in May 2000, the Council re-examined the context that allowed the parties, especially the RUF, to pursue the military option. Anecdotal evidence showed that control of the diamond fields, mainly in the Kono district, was the source of money for the purchase of weapons and other rebels' expenditures. The Council voted resolution 1306 on 5 July 2000 to tackle 'conflict diamonds' and strengthen the ban on arms exports. Adopted under Chapter VII, the long resolution contained two parts. In part A, the Council:

⁷ United Nations Security Council resolution 1334 of 22 December 2000.

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- Expressed its concern at the role played by the illicit trade in diamonds in fuelling the conflict, and at reports that such diamonds transited neighbouring countries, including Liberia;
- Welcomed ongoing efforts by interested states, the International Diamond Manufacturers Association, and other representatives of the industry and non-governmental experts to improve the transparency of the international diamond trade, and encouraged further action;
- Decided that all states should take the necessary measures to prohibit the direct or indirect import of all rough diamonds from Sierra Leone to their territory;
- Requested the Government of Sierra Leone to ensure, as a matter of urgency, that an effective Certificate of Origin regime for trade in diamonds was in operation in Sierra Leone;
- Decided that such measures be established for 18 months, after which it would review the situation, including the extent of the government's authority over the diamond-producing areas, to decide whether to extend or modify them or adopt further measures;
- Requested the Sanctions Committee⁸ to hold an exploratory hearing in New York to assess the role of diamonds in the Sierra Leone conflict and to report on the hearing to the Council.

In Part B, resolution 1306:

- Reminded states of their obligation under resolution 1171 (1998), called on them to enact legislation making it a criminal offence to act in violation of measures contained in that resolution and to report to the Committee on implementation no later than 31 July 2000;⁹
- Urged all states, relevant UN bodies and others to report to the Sanctions Committee information on possible violations of the measures imposed by the Council;
- Requested the Secretary-General to establish a panel of experts, of no more than five members, to collect information on possible violations and the link between trade in diamonds and in arms; to consider the adequacy of air traffic control systems; to participate in the requested hearing; and to report with recommendations on the implementation of the measures imposed by resolutions 1171 (1998) and 1306 (2000) no later than 31 October 2000.

The Council also addressed the issue of impunity by backing the establishment of an independent Special Court to deal with those responsible for atrocities committed in the course of the conflict. On 14 August 2000, resolution 1315:

⁸ The Sanctions Committee on Sierra Leone had been established by resolution 1132 of 8 October 1997 in reaction to the AFRC coup, which overthrew President Kabbah's government. See section I, above.

⁹ Resolution 1171 of 5 June 1998 had prohibited the sale and supply of arms and related material to non-governmental forces in Sierra Leone.

- Recalled the United Nations' understanding that the amnesty provisions of the Lomé Agreement should not apply to international crimes of genocide, crimes against humanity, war crimes and other serious violations of international humanitarian law;
- Recognised the desire of the government for assistance from the UN in establishing a strong and credible court that would meet the objectives of bringing justice and ensuring lasting peace;
- Requested the Secretary-General to negotiate an agreement with the Government of Sierra Leone to create an independent Special Court;
- Recommended that the jurisdiction of the Special Court include crimes against humanity, war crimes and other serious violations of international humanitarian law, as well as crimes under relevant Sierra Leonean law committed within the territory of Sierra Leone;
- Recommended that the Special Court have personal jurisdiction over persons who bore the greatest responsibility for the commission of those crimes, 'including those leaders who [...] [had] threatened the establishment and implementation of the peace process';
- Requested the Secretary-General to submit a report on the implementation of the resolution, in particular his negotiations with the Government of Sierra Leone on the establishment of the Special Court, and his recommendations, no later than 30 days from the date of the resolution.

In early 2001, the Security Council discussed the first report of the Panel of Experts established by resolution 1306 (2000). On 7 March 2001 it adopted resolution 1343, unique in addressing the situation in Sierra Leone by taking measures against Charles Taylor's government in Liberia. Based on the panel's finding 'that the bulk of RUF diamonds [left] Sierra Leone through Liberia, and that such illicit trade [could not] be conducted without the [...] involvement of Liberian government officials at the highest levels', the resolution expressed 'deep concern at the unequivocal and overwhelming evidence' that the Liberian government was 'actively supporting the RUF at all levels'. The Council thus determined that Liberia's support to armed rebellion in neighbouring countries was 'a threat to international peace and security in the region'. Resolution 1343 (2001), *inter alia*:

- Demanded that the Government of Liberia immediately cease its support for the RUF and for other armed rebel groups in the region, and expel all RUF members from Liberia; cease all direct or indirect import of Sierra Leone rough diamonds not controlled through the Certificate of Origin regime; freeze funds or assets for the benefit of the RUF; ground all Liberia-registered aircraft until it had updated its register and given the Council the updated information;
- Called on the President of Liberia to help ensure that the RUF would give UNAMSIL free access throughout Sierra Leone; release all abductees; enter their fighters in the DDR process; and return all weapons and other equipment seized from UNAMSIL;
- Demanded that all states in the region prevent armed individuals and groups from using their territory to commit attacks on neighbouring countries and contribute to further destabilise the situation, particularly on the borders between Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone;

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- Decided that all states should prevent the supply to Liberia of arms and related materiel; and the direct or indirect import of all rough diamonds from Liberia;
- Decided also that all states should prevent the entry into or transit through their territories of senior members of the Government of Liberia and its armed forces and their spouses and any other individuals providing financial and military support to armed rebel groups in countries neighbouring Liberia, in particular the RUF, as designated by the Sanctions Committee;
- Requested the Secretary-General to submit biannual reports, drawing from all relevant sources, on Liberia's compliance with the resolution.

A Sanctions Committee and a Panel of Experts were created by resolution 1343 (2001) to monitor compliance with the Council's demands, identify the individuals to be targeted by the travel ban and asset freeze and provide updated information. Resolutions 1306 (2000) and 1343 (2001) banned arms and diamonds sales to Sierra Leone and Liberia and put them under the scrutiny of the Sanctions Committees. President Taylor's government was the main source of destabilisation in the region. On 19 December 2001, by resolution 1385, the Council extended the ban on uncertified rough diamonds.

4. Completing disarmament and organising elections: Security Council resolutions since 2002

The mandate later moved to the DDR programme and the assistance for the organisation of elections and for the rebuilding of a viable security sector. On 16 January 2002, Security Council resolution 1389 defined UNAMSIL's supporting role in the organisation of elections. The Council, *inter alia*:

- Decided that UNAMSIL should undertake election-related tasks, including: (a) assisting with logistic support to the National Electoral Commission for the transport of electoral materials and personnel, including the use of the air assets of UNAMSIL, storage and distribution of election materials prior to the elections, movement of ballot papers after the elections, logistic assistance to international election observers, and the use of UNAMSIL's civilian communications facilities; (b) facilitating the free movement of people, goods and humanitarian assistance; (c) providing wider security and deterrence in the period of electoral preparations, polling and immediately after the announcement of electoral results, and, exceptionally, responding to public disorder, with the Sierra Leone police taking the lead;
- Reiterated that UNAMSIL may take the necessary action to 'afford protection to civilians under imminent threat of physical violence';
- Authorised the increase in the United Nations civilian police and endorsed the recommendation that it perform the following tasks: (a) advise and support the Sierra Leone

police; (b) assist them with an electoral training programme for their personnel, focused on establishing security for public events, human rights and police conduct;

- Welcomed the interim establishment of an electoral component in UNAMSIL to strengthen the coordination of electoral activities between all stakeholders;
- Underlined the government's and the National Electoral Commission's responsibility to hold free and fair elections, and encouraged generous international support and assistance.

On 28 March 2002, Security Council resolution 1400 welcomed the formal completion of disarmament while raising concern at the financial shortfall of the programme; welcomed agreement on the Special Court; expressed concern at continuing human rights abuses and allegations of sexual abuse by UN personnel; emphasised that the development of the government's administrative capacities was essential to the holding of free and fair elections; and urged the government, with the assistance of UNAMSIL, to accelerate the restoration of civil authority and public services throughout the country, in particular in the diamond-mining areas, including on border security tasks.

Further resolutions focused on UNAMSIL's exit strategy, defining benchmarks for drawdown and withdrawal, to be completed in December 2005.

III. Implementation of Security Council resolutions

I. UNAMSIL and the provision of a stable and secure environment

Initial challenges for UNAMSIL: Deployment and security from November 1999 to May 2000

UNAMSIL's priority was to provide a secure environment for the implementation of the Lomé Agreement and to help build the confidence needed to launch the sensitive disarmament process after several years of conflict. The UN force was also requested to 'afford protection of civilians under imminent threat of physical violence within its capabilities and areas of deployment', including by taking 'all measures'.

To organise a smooth transition from ECOMOG, a fighting regional force controlled by one country (Nigeria) that had borne a high cost for its engagement in terms of human lives and financial resources,

¹⁰ Nigerian heavy and costly military involvement in Liberia and Sierra Leone to prevent the rebellions of Charles Taylor and Foday Sankoh, respectively, from taking power was a decision made by military rulers who had no public opinion to care about. The democratic election of Olusegun Obasanjo in December 1999 would change the internal politics and prompt the Nigerian decision to withdraw from Sierra Leone in the context of ECOMOG.

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to a UN force expected to be neutral, was a major challenge.¹⁰ The modalities of Nigeria's incorporation in UNAMSIL had to be dealt with astutely to avoid a confusion in the roles and objectives that distinguished one force from the other, while allowing UNAMSIL to benefit from the West Africans' deeper knowledge of country and actors. Competition for the force commander position, between the new troop-contributors to UNAMSIL (India being the largest) and the Nigerians who were to join the UN force and continue to play a key role in it, was another delicate issue.

A condition for UNAMSIL's success in launching the DDR process was the quick deployment of military and civilian staff in a country where large areas were under the control of RUF/AFRC rebels or pro-government Civilian Defence Forces (CDF), while the official army was weak and disorganised. UNAMSIL would deploy in potentially hostile areas where armed groups had been exploiting resources, especially diamonds, and terrorising civilians. Furthermore, disarmament depended to a large extent on the encouragement of RUF leader Sankoh, who had a record of unstable decisions and failed commitments.

The Secretary-General's first report on UNAMSIL (6 December 1999) noted as positive developments the president's announcement that a Government of National Unity had been established with eight members of the RUF/AFRC, the appointment of RUF leader Sankoh as Chairman of the Commission for the Management of Strategic Resources, National Reconstruction and Development and of AFRC leader Johnny Paul Koroma as Chairman of the Commission for the Consolidation of Peace, and the provisional registration of the Revolutionary United Front Party (RUF), which was meant to reflect the RUF's renunciation of armed rebellion and transformation into a political party. But the report also observed that the security situation had deteriorated in October and November as a result of increasing 'ceasefire violations and human rights abuses by rebel elements'.¹¹

The launch of the DDR programme on 20 October 1999 had met with a 'poor response' from ex-combatants. As of 2 December, those registered at the DDR sites totalled 4,217 out of an estimated total of 45,000 fighters (male fighters from RUF, AFRC, ex-Sierra Leonean army and CDF).¹² Some RUF commanders publicly opposed the disarmament of troops under their command. That was the case of Sam Bockarie, in the eastern strongholds of the RUF, who said they '[would] not disarm unless Nigerian ECOMOG troops [withdrew]' and vowed to 'resist any attempts at forced disarmament' by UN troops.¹³ Despite Sankoh's public appeals, doubts remained about his commitment. The report observed an 'escalation of attacks on civilians by former rebel elements in the areas west of the Occra Hills, along the Lungi-Port road, as well as around Kabala and in parts of Koinadugu', which 'frequently [involved] rape, abduction and harassment, in addition to looting and destruction of property'.

Deployment was in its early stages in December 1999. The first contingent from Kenya had arrived on 29 November, as preparations for the deployment of Indian contingents were underway. The Secretary-General had appointed his Special Representative¹⁴ and the force commander.¹⁵ The first

¹¹ First Report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone, S/1999/1223, 6 December 1999.

¹² There was no gender disaggregated data in the DDR figures and girls and women directly or indirectly involved in the fighting groups had been excluded from the official DDR programme. See section V of the present report.

¹³ *Ibid.*

report on UNAMSIL noted that 'while the United Nations [expedited] the deployment of its troops [...] ECOMOG [was] expected to continue to play a critical role in providing security'. The Nigerian decision to withdraw would require a major change in UNAMSIL's plans.

On 23 December 1999, the Secretary-General informed the Security Council that Nigeria had decided to repatriate its ECOMOG troops and recommended UNAMSIL's expansion of its military component and mandate to take over the security functions thus far assumed by the West African force. The Nigerian decision was the result of a major change in the regional power's political situation. Democratically elected president Olusegun Obasanjo had replaced the military rulers who had committed troops to military operations in Liberia and Sierra Leone without being held accountable by their citizens. There was also some frustration in Nigerian circles over the arrival of the UN operation and the reluctance of non-African donors to take on more of the financial burden of ECOMOG.¹⁶

The second report on UNAMSIL, dated 11 January 2000, observed that the authorised strength was considered sufficient, together with ECOMOG's presence, to assist the DDR programme and create an acceptable level of security.¹⁷ The Sierra Leonean army 'which [had] yet to be restructured, retrained and equipped' was unable to make a substantial contribution to national security. With ECOMOG leaving, the Secretary-General saw no alternative but to keep the process on track rather than expand UNAMSIL. He proposed a revision of resolution 1270 (1999) and a new concept of operations to allow UNAMSIL 'through its military presence [...] capabilities and posture [...] to deter attempts to derail the peace process'.¹⁸

The report requested a force of 11,100 personnel, 'including 12 infantry battalions, force and sector headquarters personnel, 2 military engineer companies, adequate medical personnel and facilities, communications and transport units, a helicopter and other military support elements'. It detailed the envisaged deployment in four sectors throughout the country including population centres, DDR activities and vital communication lines.¹⁹ Also mentioned was the need for robust rules of engagement (ROE) in light of the additional security tasks. The need for close coordination and deployment of UN battalions in synchrony with the repatriation of ECOMOG troops was also highlighted.

The third report, released on 7 March 2000, noted lack of progress in disarmament in the north and east regions, continuing interference with humanitarian activities and UNAMSIL patrols, and harassment of the civilian population by rebels.²⁰ Sankoh had made hostile public statements against UNAMSIL and violated the travel ban by travelling to Côte d'Ivoire and South Africa.²¹ Serious incidents against

¹⁴ Oluyemi Adeniji from Nigeria.

¹⁵ Major-General Vijay Kumar Jetley from India.

¹⁶ See Funmi Olonisakin, 'Peacekeeping in Sierra Leone, The Story of UNAMSIL', *Histories of UN Peace Operations*, A Project of the International Peace Academy, 2008.

¹⁷ Second Report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone, S/2000/13, 11 January 2000.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁹ The four sectors were the Freetown peninsula, the Lungi/Port Loko area, the Makeni/Magburaka/Koidu area and the Bo/Kenema/Kailahun area.

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UNAMSIL had occurred. In one case, RUF rebels seized a large number of weapons, ammunition and vehicles from Guinean troops; in others, soldiers of the UNAMSIL Kenyan battalion were ambushed and had to surrender their weapons to ex-Sierra Leonean army combatants in the Occra Hills area, and to RUF elements near Makeni.²² In February, a convoy of Indian troops going from Kenema to Daru was stopped by well-armed RUF fighters and forced to return to Kenema.²³

The report indicated that the Secretariat and the force commander had urged troop-contributing countries to ensure that troops be equipped in accordance with UN standards.²⁴ As of 1 March 2000, UNAMSIL's military personnel had reached 7,391 out of the authorised 11,100 ceiling. UNAMSIL had deployed in several important locations, but was opposed by RUF elements in the key regions of Koidu and Kailahun. The human rights situation remained dismal, despite some improvement in the UN areas of deployment. Elsewhere, looting of villages, house burnings, harassment and abduction of civilians, rape and sexual abuse continued, 'mostly perpetrated by ex-Sierra Leone Army elements from the surrounding Occra Hills'.²⁵

In its final observations, the report expressed concern at Sankoh's often negative and confusing approach to key elements of the peace process and the UN role, and called on the RUF to return all weapons and equipment and to allow UNAMSIL free movement. One of the UN's main priorities in Sierra Leone remained 'the speedy establishment of a credible peacekeeping presence'.²⁶ It was clearly not yet the case in March 2000.

The culmination of UNAMSIL's failed start: The May 2000 hostage crisis and early responses

Political developments were generally positive in March and April 2000 before the major setback of early May. In a meeting of the National Commission on DDR held in March, all faction leaders, including Sankoh and Johnny Paul Koroma, had agreed to give UNAMSIL unhindered access to all parts of the country. The UN operation had been able to deploy to the RUF stronghold of Kailahun, but access remained blocked to Kono, where RUF fighters controlled diamond mining activities. At UN headquarters, the deployment of UNAMSIL was receiving special attention as demonstrated by the visit of the Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations from 19 to 21 March. The mobilisation of US\$ 70 million in donor pledges at a conference held in London at the UK's initiative was another positive development. In the last weeks of April, however, tensions re-emerged between UNAMSIL and RUF combatants around DDR reception centres, especially in the Makeni/Magburaka area.²⁷

²⁰Third Report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone, S/2000/186, 7 March 2000.

²¹The Sanctions Committee convened an emergency session on 18 February and urged Sankoh to return immediately to Sierra Leone.

²²Ibid.

²³Ibid.

²⁴Ibid.

²⁵Ibid.

²⁶Ibid.

Events took a turn for the worse on 1 May, when RUF fighters approached the DDR reception centre in Makeni demanding that UNAMSIL turn over disarmed ex-combatants and their weapons in order to punish them for having joined the DDR programme. The rebels detained three UNAMSIL military observers, destroyed part of the camp and looted the town. In Magburaka, RUF fighters tried to disarm UNAMSIL troops, provoking an exchange of fire throughout the day. A few soldiers of the Kenyan battalion were injured. RUF destroyed DDR facilities in both locations, where attacks on the Kenyan peacekeepers continued. Incidents multiplied in all places where RUF fighters were in contact with UNAMSIL.²⁸ As immediate measures were taken by the force commander, a Zambian battalion moving from Lungi to Makeni was ambushed by the RUF in one of the most humiliating episodes for UNAMSIL: '[s]ome 400 UN troops were believed to have fallen into the hands of RUF, which reportedly had moved 200 of them to its stronghold in the Kono district.'²⁹

Clashes continued in the north and west involving not only RUF and UNAMSIL but also government forces (SLA) and the CDF. Rumours abounded, including reports of fighters infiltrating Sierra Leone from neighbouring countries. UNAMSIL headquarters in Freetown had serious difficulties to gather reliable information, increasing the feeling of total disruption in the UN mission.³⁰ On 15 May 2000, 139 detainees from the Zambian battalion were taken to the Liberian border and 15 of them moved to Monrovia in Liberia. The Secretary-General's report commended the 'personal involvement of President Taylor' resulting in the peacekeepers' release.³¹ On 15 May there were still 352 UNAMSIL personnel in RUF hands, including 297 from Zambia, 29 from Kenya, 23 from India, and three military observers. Twenty-five peacekeepers had been wounded and 15 had gone missing.

The arrival of UK troops at the Lungi airport and of a substantial British naval presence offshore was a major turning point in this chain of events. As noted in the 19 May 2000 report, though the claimed objective of the UK intervention was the evacuation of its nationals and other foreigners, it 'boosted the confidence of the Sierra Leoneans and enabled UNAMSIL to redeploy much-needed troops to areas east of Freetown'.³² UNAMSIL was reinforced by the arrival of 300 'well-trained and well-equipped troops' from Jordan. That mention in the report seemed to indicate that good training and equipment was not the norm for some of the peacekeepers that had already been deployed. Additional Indian troops were also sent to UNAMSIL. As of 19 May 2000, there were 9,495 military personnel in total, the largest contributors being Nigeria (3,235), India (1,676), Jordan (1,136), and Kenya (882).

Sankoh became the centre of diplomatic attention. Before being engaged by envoys of the heads of state of Liberia, Libya, Mali, and Nigeria, as well as the Secretary-General's Special Representative (SRSG), he had refrained from ordering his troops to stop attacks on UNAMSIL and release detained peacekeepers. On 8 May, thousands of people demonstrated against the RUF near Sankoh's house in

²⁷ Fourth Report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone, S/2000/455, 19 May 2000.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Olonisakin, *op.cit.*

³¹ Fourth Report of the Secretary-General, *op.cit.*

³² Ibid.

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Freetown. The protest degenerated into an exchange of fire, and Sankoh fled to go into hiding, but was apprehended by pro-government elements. ECOWAS strongly condemned attacks on UNAMSIL and demanded Charles Taylor personally to ensure the release of detainees and the resumption of the peace process.³³

The Secretary-General recommended the adoption of immediate measures to put more political pressure on the RUF with 'strong military posture'. The number of troops was brought to 13,000, allowing UNAMSIL to defend its positions at Lungi airport, in the Freetown peninsula and other strategic locations in the west and south of the country. UNAMSIL needed the capacity to deploy 'in sufficient numbers and backed up by adequate military means to deter attacks and, if necessary, respond decisively to any hostile action or intent'.³⁴ The mandate defined by resolution 1289 (2000) and its robust rules of engagement were sufficient for UNAMSIL 'to use force, including deadly force; in self-defence against any hostile act or intent'.

The May 2000 report on UNAMSIL acknowledged the mission's grave problems. In its final observations it said: 'it is obvious that the United Nations will have to draw lessons from its experiences in Sierra Leone. The Force, [...] designed, equipped and deployed as a peacekeeping force, was quickly forced into actual combat with one of the parties.' It added that 'many problems emerged within the mission, including with regard to command and control, cohesiveness, [...] flow of information, equipment and preparedness [...] and coordination between and within the various components'. The Secretariat was 'taking urgent steps to assess these problems and to address recognised shortfalls, in close coordination with the troop-contributing countries'.³⁵

The May 2000 crisis: Security Council debates and responses

The Council was aware of developments in Sierra Leone and UNAMSIL's unsatisfactory reaction to the incidents. These issues were raised on 13 March 2000, when the Council discussed the third report on UNAMSIL. The members of the Council were unanimous in condemning the RUF and Sankoh, and supportive of a strong UNAMSIL presence. The Ambassador of the United Kingdom, who had just visited Sierra Leone, stated that he had not got the commitment to peace from the main factional leaders, particularly RUF leader Foday Sankoh, and added that the Council's authority was being thwarted. UNAMSIL, he added, had not got off to a successful start.³⁶ People had come to believe that the UN was responsible for the withdrawal of ECOMOG, whom they trusted to protect them, to replace it with ill-equipped and poorly motivated UN contingents. He stressed that UNAMSIL had to be brought to full strength, in quality and in quantity.³⁷

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Ibid., para. 105.

³⁶ 'Security Council stresses need for disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration of ex-combatants in Sierra Leone', *Security Council Press Release, SC/6821*, 13 March 2000.

³⁷ Ibid.

The Ambassador of China at the UN observed that the performance of the RUF, and Sankoh in particular, had become the major roadblock to the peace process.³⁸ The US Ambassador called the failure of the RUF leader to live up to his promises 'disquieting', said the UN operation was 'not fully up and running', and that its expansion would take several months.³⁹ The Canadian Ambassador stated that a robust troop commitment in support of a strong mandate was the best contribution the Council could make to individual security. Canada was concerned that, he continued, UNAMSIL's ability to protect civilians might erode with future confrontations.⁴⁰ The Ambassador of Bangladesh, then in the Council's presidency, said that the Council should be prepared to take specific measures for Sankoh and the RUF. He also observed that UNAMSIL had no mandate to prevent illegal activities (meaning diamond mining in rebel-held areas) and the Council should examine that limitation in the future.⁴¹

The first official reaction of the Council to the RUF's direct attack on UNAMSIL was a presidential statement issued on 4 May 2000. The Council, it said, 'condemns in the strongest terms the armed attacks perpetrated by the RUF against the forces of the UNAMSIL, and their continued detention of a large number of United Nations and other international personnel' and 'expresses its outrage at the killing of a number of United Nations peacekeepers of the Kenyan battalion'. The Council, it added, 'considers Mr Foday Sankoh, as leader of the RUF, to be responsible for these actions' and 'believes that he must be held accountable, together with the perpetrators, for their actions'.⁴²

In a late-night session convened on 11 May 2000 at the request of the African Group, the Council held a vibrant debate about the appropriate response to the crisis in Sierra Leone. The Secretary-General commended the Council's sense of urgency in dealing with the crisis. He said: 'It is vital that the world should not now abandon the people of Sierra Leone in their hour of greatest need', and pleaded, 'Let us not fail Sierra Leone. Let us not fail Africa. [...] [L]et us back words with deeds, and mandates with the resources needed to make them work'.⁴³ His request was to reinforce UNAMSIL troops 'so they [could] defend themselves and their mandate effectively'. He highlighted the UK's 'invaluable contribution in securing the airport', and, in response to West African leaders who had called for a revision of the mandate to give UNAMSIL a clear enforcement role, he insisted that the first priority was to ensure the mission's capacity to carry out the tasks implied by the existing mandate.

The UK representative at the meeting commended India, Bangladesh and Jordan for expediting the deployment of their battalions. The mandate was sufficient to use force in self-defence and where possible in defence of the civilian population; and changing UNAMSIL's mandate would not itself

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² 'Security Council, in presidential statement, condemns actions of RUF in Sierra Leone, says Foday Sankoh must be held accountable', *Security Council Press Release*, SC/6852, 4 May 2000.

⁴³ 'Secretary-General pleads with Council not to fail people of Sierra Leone, Africa', *Security Council Press Release*, SC/6857, 11 May 2000.

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change it into an effective peace enforcement mission, he said.⁴⁴ The Canadian Ambassador noted that UNAMSIL's troops were 'low in equipment' and stressed the need to respect the principle of unity of command. He noted that the threat of sliding back into civil war in Sierra Leone demonstrated 'the need for a rapidly improved capacity for the United Nations rapid reaction' and encouraged member states to improve the UN in 'military planning, headquarters oversight, access to reliable field-level intelligence, effective communications and longer-term contingency planning'.⁴⁵

The US representative informed of his country's diplomatic action in Sierra Leone, particularly the visit of President Clinton's Special Envoy for the Promotion of Democracy and Human Rights, Reverend Jesse Jackson, to work with the West African leaders on a solution to the crisis. The US would assist the deployment of additional troops for UNAMSIL and considered providing equipment support. The representative of the Netherlands mentioned the 'dangerous message' conveyed by the amnesty blanket of the Lomé Agreement. He recalled that he had proposed 'the inclusion of a reference to such concerns in the relevant resolutions but was prevailed upon not to insist because any mention of accountability would prolong the war'. The Council had to wonder to what extent that had contributed to Sankoh's behaviour, he continued.⁴⁶ France and Norway for their part asked the Council 'to act decisively' to prevent the illegal trade in diamonds that fuelled the war.

The Ambassador of Bangladesh, an important troop-contributor for UNAMSIL, said that the battalion promised by his government would be ready for airlifting by 20 May. His words on UNAMSIL's failures were interesting, saying that concerns had been voiced and that UN peacekeeping was dysfunctional because the troops the United Nations deployed – troops mostly from developing countries – were often ill-equipped, ill-trained and ill-prepared. He added that if developing countries would stop responding to the frantic calls of the United Nations that day, there would be no peacekeeping the next, barring a few choicest areas in the world of strategic interest to major powers. Blaming the failure on the peacekeepers was the easy way out of meeting the organisation's collective responsibility.⁴⁷

The Indian representative urged the Council 'not to consider withdrawing as an option'. India had no intention of withdrawing its troops and was sending a second battalion urgently. Responding to those who believed that the UN could not do what needed to be done and that 'force should be used by others with the blessings of the Security Council', he warned strongly against this, recalling Somalia and 'the dangers inherent in forces outside United Nations command taking military action in a theatre where peacekeepers are deployed'. 'We must stay there for two reasons', he added, 'First, because to leave now would be to abandon the people of Sierra Leone to a terrible fate, and second, because the credibility of the United Nations is at stake'.⁴⁸ The Ambassador of Pakistan asked the Secretariat 'to assess what went wrong in the planning and deployment of peacekeepers in Sierra Leone, including the configuration of the force'.⁴⁹

⁴⁴ Ibid.


⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Ibid.



A week after the emergency debate, the Council approved resolution 1299 (2000) expanding UNAMSIL's military component to 13,000 personnel. The situation in Sierra Leone remained high on the Council's agenda in the following months. On 21 June 2000, the Council held a private meeting with a delegation of the ECOWAS Mediation Committee on Sierra Leone (Mali, Ghana, Liberia, Nigeria, Togo, and Guinea). The Council informed ECOWAS of ongoing discussions on the strengthening of UNAMSIL, the control of diamond exports and arms imports, and the provision of justice.

The recovery of UNAMSIL from mid-2000 to 2001

The security situation remained highly volatile in the three months following May 2000. While the Freetown and Lungi peninsulas were relatively stable, incidents multiplied in other parts of the country. RUF ambushed UNAMSIL troops, who responded more robustly than in previous events. UNAMSIL launched military operations to ensure the security of its personnel and restore their freedom of movement, as was the case on 15 July, when troops from four contingents attacked a position in Kailahun where the RUF had refused to free peacekeepers. Most of those held hostage had, however, been released via Liberia as the result of the diplomatic pressure on Charles Taylor.

In his fifth report on UNAMSIL, of 31 July 2000, the Secretary-General detailed measures taken to redress the serious weaknesses exposed by the attacks on peacekeepers. A high-level assessment team, led by a former Assistant Secretary-General in the Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO), had reviewed UNAMSIL's operations and made recommendations.⁵⁰ The team found 'serious lack of cohesion within the Mission' and 'no commonly shared understanding of the mandate and rules of engagement'. Some contingents were insufficiently prepared to deal with the difficult environment and logistic challenges on the ground, and serious problems related to internal communication and coordination between the civilian and military components and within each component (owing in part to a lack of communications equipment). Also noted was a lack of integrated planning and logistic support, and insufficient coordination and sharing of information with UN and other agencies and with diplomatic missions. Some military units showed a lack of training and others had serious shortfalls in equipment. Military support units were lacking despite attempts to find member states willing to make such units available.⁵¹

Detailed recommendations to improve the operational effectiveness of UNAMSIL were given to various units in UNAMSIL and at headquarters for immediate follow-up. According to the assessment team, an important cause of the problems of UNAMSIL was 'the fast growth of the Mission from a small team of military observers to a large multi-disciplinary peacekeeping operation with complex organisational and logistical requirements'. The report was confident in the implementation of corrective measures. The mission's military headquarters established a joint operation cell with officers from all contingents, and mixed civilian-military coordination mechanisms, including on logistic support. Progress was made in meetings between the Secretariat and troop-contributors to address issues of command and control and shortfalls in equipment. Similar meetings were held in the field between

⁵⁰ Fifth Report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone, S/2000/751, 31 July 2000.

⁵¹ Ibid.

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the leadership of the mission and contingent commanders to discuss the mandate, explain the rules of engagement and improve internal communication. An internal ROE training programme was underway.⁵²

At the end of July 2000, the military strength of UNAMSIL had reached 12,440 personnel, close to the maximum of 13,000 authorised by the Council on 5 July. This reinforcement and the other measures clearly made a difference in discouraging the RUF from prolonging hostilities. After the adoption of resolution 1313 of 4 August 2000, which '[admitted] UNAMSIL's weaknesses' and outlined UNAMSIL's future priority tasks, the Secretary-General made new recommendations. In his sixth report on UNAMSIL he recommended a further increase to 20,500 military personnel, while maintaining the mandate based on resolutions 1270 (1999) and 1289 (2000) and robust rules of engagement.⁵³ He made reference to the recently issued report of the Panel on United Nations Peace Operations – known as the Brahimi Report – in order to defend the Sierra Leone case:

In a sense, the course taken by the Security Council, Member States and the Secretariat with regard to the situation in Sierra Leone represents an important first test of our joint responsibility to implement the practical recommendations made by the Panel, with a view to making the United Nations truly credible as a force for peace.⁵⁴

The Security Council visited Sierra Leone, Liberia, Guinea, Mali, and Nigeria from 7 to 14 October 2000. Headed by the Ambassador of the United Kingdom, the 11-member mission focused on UNAMSIL restructuring efforts, security developments, prospects for elections, arms and diamonds, and the regional dimension of the crisis, especially the attacks on Guinea. The mission met with various national interlocutors, including civil society organisations (and women's organisations). The mission 'noted that different contingents had different perceptions of the mandate and tasks of UNAMSIL'.⁵⁵ It confirmed that considerable progress had been made in implementing the measures recommended, but mentioned significant shortcomings in the coordination of logistics and the equipment of contingents, issues which it said '[required] action by United Nations headquarters and the troop contributors themselves'.⁵⁶

The Council's report also dealt with the RUF after the replacement of Foday Sankoh by Issa Sesay, as well as with Charles Taylor's role. Most interlocutors of the Council's mission, 'including those at most senior levels, had no doubt that President Taylor exercised strong influence, even direct control over RUF'. Presidents Conté of Guinea and Obasanjo of Nigeria identified the Liberian president as the most difficult factor in the region.⁵⁷ Taylor, who had also met the Council mission, denied all accusations. The mission concluded that 'the complexity of problems in Sierra Leone and its neighbours [...] [required] extraordinary action'; and made recommendations on the peace process, military aspects,

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ Sixth Report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone, S/2000/832, 24 August 2000.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ Report of the Security Council mission to Sierra Leone, S/2000/992, 16 October 2000.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

the regional dimension, the DDR programme, human rights and humanitarian assistance, and the role of the Government of Sierra Leone.⁵⁸ It insisted on the need for an UN-based process for overall strategic coordination that would include Council members, the Secretariat, ECOWAS, troop-contributing countries to UNAMSIL, and the Government of Sierra Leone.

On 3 November 2000 the Council issued a presidential statement condemning 'the continued cross-border attacks along the border area of Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone', supporting the coordination strategy advocated by its mission in the region and the Secretary-General's appeal to member states to participate in UNAMSIL.⁵⁹ Renewed contact between the Sierra Leonean government, UNAMSIL, ECOWAS and the RUF on 10 November in Abuja, Nigeria, led to a ceasefire agreement with UNAMSIL monitoring, and promised freedom of movement for the UN throughout the country, as well as return of UNAMSIL seized weapons and the immediate resumption of the DDR programme. Despite early conflicting signals from the RUF leaders, the ceasefire held up, except along the Guinean border, where fighting resulted in heavy civilian casualties in south-western Guinea. Accusing the RUF and the Liberian government, Guinean forces shelled RUF positions in the Sierra Leone territory.

UNAMSIL experienced important leadership changes with the arrival in November 2000 of a new force commander,⁶⁰ a new deputy force commander,⁶¹ and a new chief of staff.⁶² British troops, in bilateral cooperation with the government, intensified training and provision of equipment to the Sierra Leonean army, which was taking over security responsibilities in some areas in coordination with UNAMSIL. In his eighth report on the mission, the Secretary-General recalled his recommendation of an increase of UNAMSIL's strength to 20,500 troops.⁶³ On 30 March 2001, through resolution 1346, the Council authorised an increase to 17,500 personnel.

The Council intensified its pressure on RUF supporters in the region in early 2001 on the basis of findings of the UN Panel of Experts, established by resolution 1306 (2000). The Panel's report confirmed that mining and trade of diamonds was 'a major and primary source of income for the RUF [...] more than enough to sustain its military activities'. The estimated value of RUF diamonds was 'from as little as \$25 million per annum to as much as \$125 million'. Liberia was the main venue for the exports of rough diamonds by the RUF. In the absence of a global certification system, the Panel recommended that such systems be required of all diamond-exporting countries in West Africa with immediate reference to Guinea and Côte d'Ivoire.⁶⁴ It proposed 'a complete embargo on all diamonds from Liberia' until it demonstrated that it was no longer involved in trafficking.⁶⁵

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ 'Security Council condemns continued cross-border attacks along border area of Sierra Leone, Guinea and Liberia', *Security Council Press Release, SC/6946*, 3 November 2000.

⁶⁰ Lieutenant General Daniel Opande of Kenya.

⁶¹ Major General Martin Agwai of Nigeria.

⁶² Brigadier General Alastair Duncan from the United Kingdom.

⁶³ Eighth Report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone, S/2000/1199, 15 December 2000.

⁶⁴ Report of the Panel of Experts appointed pursuant to Security Council resolution 1306 (2000), para. 19, in relation to Sierra Leone, S/2000/1195, 20 December 2000.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

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The Panel 'was struck by the widespread breaking of Security Council sanctions on both weapons and diamonds' and found 'unequivocal and overwhelming evidence' of Liberia's active support for the RUF.⁶⁶ Burkina Faso was identified as a transit point for arms shipments for use in Sierra Leone. The Panel mentioned the role of aircraft in the RUF's supply chain and gave examples of arms deliveries from Eastern Europe to Liberia with the involvement of businessmen associated to Charles Taylor.

During the day-long discussion of the Panel's findings, 26 speakers took the floor: The UK representative said that there should be 'no sanctuary for sanctions busters' and that President Taylor had been callously prolonging conflict for personal gain, his recent overtures being 'too little too late'.⁶⁷ The US representative shared that stance and co-sponsored with the UK a draft resolution to impose fresh sanctions on Liberia. On 7 March 2001, the Council adopted the sanctions targeted at Taylor's government under resolution 1343.⁶⁸

2. UNAMSIL's role in the DDR programme and the organisation of elections

The revival of the disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration programme

It took approximately a year after the May 2000 crisis to restart the key DDR programme. After the Abuja agreement, the new military leadership of UNAMSIL and the SRSG focused on initiating communications with the RUF to convince them to allow UNAMSIL's full deployment in the areas they still controlled and lay down their weapons. The replacement of Foday Sankoh – then in custody – by Issa Sesay, the military presence of a restructured UNAMSIL and the newly trained Sierra Leonean army soldiers backed by the British task force discouraged the RUF from pursuing an alternative to disarmament.⁶⁹ A factor usually neglected in the literature on the conflict was the military pressure exerted by Guinea.⁷⁰ The latter's decisive response to attacks on its territory from Liberia and Sierra Leone closed the RUF option of using the Guinean forest as a haven.

On 2 May 2001, a meeting in Abuja, led to the pro-government CDF's decision to disarm simultaneously, starting in the Kambia district, where fighting between RUF and the Guinean army was continuous. Known as 'the Kambia Formula', this decision was 'the crucial step which accelerated the peace process in post-May 2000', in the words of the SRSG. Besides enabling fast implementation of the DDR issue, he said, it resolved regional difficulties linked to Guinea's attitude.⁷¹

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ 'Security Council takes up report on diamonds, arms in Sierra Leone; Expert Panel says Council sanctions broken with impunity', *Security Council Press Release, SC/6997*, 25 January 2001.

⁶⁸ See more details on resolution 1343 (2001) in section II.3 above.

⁶⁹ FRIDE interviews with former members of Kabbah's government, Freetown, November 2008.

⁷⁰ FRIDE interviews with former members of government and academics, Freetown, November 2008.

⁷¹ Oluyemi Adeniji, 'End of assignment report of Special Representative of the Secretary-General in Sierra Leone', quoted in Olonisakin, op. cit.

The tenth report on UNAMSIL (25 June 2001) noted that disarmament of RUF and CDF in Kambia and Port Loko concluded on schedule, and the Sierra Leonean army completed its deployment in the Kambia district on 31 May. RUF had released 591 child combatants on 25 May and 178 on 4 June. Clashes between CDF and RUF in the Kono district ceased after discussions between UNAMSIL and the local commanders of both groups.⁷² The reintegration aspect of the DDR programme, however, caused some concern. The report reads:

*There are still critical gaps in the reintegration programme, including the absence of a bridge between demobilisation and reintegration, a shortage of resources for assistance beyond the short-term reintegration period, a lack of coordination with the military reintegration plan and weak linkages with parallel and bilaterally funded programmes in community reintegration.*⁷³

Disarmament progressed swiftly throughout the country. The number of demobilised combatants had reached 36,741 in December 2001, with 13,500 collected weapons and 2.8 million pieces of ammunition.⁷⁴ On 17 January 2002, the Joint Committee on DDR declared the end of the process and announced the final figures: between May 2001 and January 2002, 47,076 combatants were disarmed, and 15,840 weapons and 2 million rounds of ammunition were collected. In two previous phases of disarmament, 11,824 weapons had been collected and mostly destroyed by UNAMSIL.⁷⁵ As of March 2002, all disarmed combatants had received their initial reinsertion payment and 17,951 had been absorbed in various short-term reintegration projects. But the funding shortfall for the reintegration programme, estimated at US\$ 13.48 million for the year 2002, was a major problem.⁷⁶

The UNAMSIL-supported May 2002 parliamentary and presidential elections

UNAMSIL was asked to support the organisation of elections at the end of the president's mandate in 2001. Due to the delays in the DDR process, the restoration of state authority and the peace process more generally, Parliament gave the president two six-month extensions in order to prepare for credible and secure elections. RUF and other actors favoured the establishment of a transitional government of national unity, but these calls were rejected by the government and key international players. In late 2001, the NEC initiated voter registration. A National Consultative Conference endorsed the date of 14 May 2002 for parliamentary and presidential elections.

The December 2001 report on UNAMSIL identified the operational and political challenges that should be addressed before holding the elections.⁷⁷ The proposed UN role in the electoral process focused on technical and logistical assistance to the NEC, as well as on general security support. The Secretary-General requested more international staff for the electoral component of the mission and consultancy funds for specific tasks, including support to the international observers.⁷⁸ UNAMSIL

⁷² Tenth Report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone, S/2001/627, 25 June 2001.

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ Fourteenth Report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone, S/2002/267, 14 March 2002.

⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁷ Twelfth Report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone, S/2001/1195, 13 December 2001.

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would provide security during the electoral process through a realignment of its military deployment based on the electoral districts, robust patrolling and 'exceptionally' through interventions 'to respond to situations of public disorder; with the Sierra Leone police taking the lead'.⁷⁹ The UN civilian police would give advice and support to the 6,500-strong national police through electoral training. An additional 30 officers would bring the civilian police component to a total of 90. Additional logistical means and public information resources were also envisaged. Radio UNAMSIL would disseminate voter education in local languages and provide 'a level playing field in the media for the candidates'.⁸⁰

Interestingly, the report contained a section entitled 'Enhancing the Effectiveness of the Mission', in line with those that followed the 2000 crisis. Measures to improve the operational effectiveness of UNAMSIL included training and briefing on health, human rights, gender, child protection, rules of engagement and mandate; review of the self-sustainment and wet-lease arrangements with troop-contributing countries; early identification of equipment deficiencies; appointment of a second Deputy Special Representative with responsibilities for governance and stabilisation, who was also the Humanitarian Coordinator and Resident Representative of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).⁸¹ At the end of 2001, there were 17,354 troops on the ground, almost the number of 17,500 authorised by the Council.

Security Council support to the revamped UNAMSIL

The Council maintained its support for UNAMSIL throughout 2001 and before the May 2002 elections. On 28 June 2001, it expressed satisfaction at progress achieved in disarmament and in the wider political process. The UK Ambassador insisted on the 'need to maintain momentum' and called on donors to commit more resources to DDR, saying that his country had contributed significantly and it was time the burden was shared more widely.⁸² He called for the establishment of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission and the Special Court as 'equally important elements of the reconciliation process'.⁸³ Countries like China and Norway pledged financial support for the Special Court. The US representative expressed satisfaction at the reversal of the situation, saying that UNAMSIL was now achieving the results the Council wanted and that it was 'a genuine success'.⁸⁴ He was less encouraged by lack of progress on the Special Court, saying that the Council had decided that it wanted those most responsible for war crimes – the ringleaders – to be held accountable, and that the United States urged all to join in contributing to the court so it could be brought into being. The process should begin with the trial of Foday Sankoh.⁸⁵

⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁸¹ Ibid.

⁸² 'Council, briefed by Secretary-General's Special Representative in Sierra Leone, considers recent signs of progress in peace process', *Security Council Press Release, SC/7087*, 28 June 2001.

⁸³ Ibid.

⁸⁴ Ibid.

⁸⁵ Ibid.

On 16 January 2002, the Council discussed the Secretary-General's report on the mission's role in the electoral process and further supported UNAMSIL. Resolution 1389 (2002) gave the mission wide-ranging tasks in the security area, as well as in logistical assistance to the NEC and approved the additional requested resources, including an increase of 30 officers to the UN civilian police.⁸⁶ On 28 March 2002, the UN mission obtained an extension of its mandate until 30 September 2002 through resolution 1400. The Council was satisfied with the recent signature of the agreement on the establishment of the Special Court envisaged by resolution 1315 (2000).⁸⁷

In a presidential statement of 22 May 2002, the Council welcomed the 14 May elections as 'an important milestone on the road to peace and security in Sierra Leone and the Mano River region'.⁸⁸ Very few security incidents were reported. UNAMSIL's support had been key: 11,000 troops had been redeployed to some 200 high-risk areas; it had assisted the national police in deploying 4,400 police personnel and mobile armed units; and with the UN country team had given critical logistical support to the NEC and to national and international electoral observers.⁸⁹ President Kabbah was re-elected with 70.06 per cent of the vote; Ernest Koroma of the All People's Congress got 22.35 per cent; and the former leader of the Armed Forces Revolutionary Council, Johnny Paul Koroma, 3 per cent, while the RUF Party candidate achieved only 1.7 per cent of the votes.⁹⁰

In his post-election report, the Secretary-General identified two factors as posing the greatest threat to stability. The first was the escalating conflict in Liberia, leading to incursions from the Liberian fighting parties into Sierra Leone. It entailed a 'real risk that Liberia and Sierra Leone could be trapped in a vicious cycle, with civil war continuously swinging back and forth between the two countries'.⁹¹ He called on the international community to act quickly. The second factor was the challenge for the Sierra Leonean army and police to assume responsibility for the country's security after UNAMSIL's departure. The gradual drawdown of the mission 'should be commensurate with the prevailing security conditions and the government's capacity to match them'.⁹²

⁸⁶ See section II.4 above for details on resolution 1389 (2002).

⁸⁷ 'Security Council extends UN mission in Sierra Leone until 30 September; urges restoration of civil authority, public services', *Security Council Press Release, SC/7344*, 28 March 2002.

⁸⁸ 'In presidential statement, Security Council welcomes Sierra Leone elections, calls on political parties to strengthen democracy, assure peace', *Security Council Press Release, SC/7408*, 22 May 2002.

⁸⁹ Fourteenth Report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone, *S/2002/679*, 19 June 2002.

⁹⁰ President Kabbah was sworn in on 19 May, and announced on 21 May a new Cabinet, which consisted only of persons affiliated with his party. The presidential party, the Sierra Leone People's Party (SLPP) won 83 of the 124 parliamentary seats; the All People's Congress won 27 seats, and Johnny Paul Koroma's Peace and Liberation Party won 2 seats. The remaining 12 parliamentary seats were filled as prescribed by the Constitution: by representatives of paramount chiefs, who were elected on 10 June 2002.

⁹¹ Fourteenth Report of the Secretary-General, *op.cit.*

⁹² *Ibid.*

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IV. Exit strategy

I. The post-electoral security assessment and key benchmarks for drawdown plans

Elections are often seen as the end of a peace process and generally considered to open the way to a relatively quick departure of international forces. But UNAMSIL remained in Sierra Leone three and a half years after the elections. There was a real exit strategy in Sierra Leone, nurtured by the UN Secretariat and the Security Council in a dialogue undertaken to organise the mission's disengagement while safeguarding what was seen as a rare success in UN peacekeeping.

In his fifteenth report on UNAMSIL (5 September 2002), the Secretary-General assessed the threats to security and described the concept of UNAMSIL's adjustment to the post-electoral situation. General security was improving as evidenced by freedom of movement, the revival of commercial activity and progress underway in resettling the displaced, except in the border areas.⁹³ An immediate threat stemmed from the slow pace of reintegration: some 24,000 male ex-combatants were still awaiting reintegration opportunities and getting increasingly restless. Furthermore, the large number of unemployed youth (both male and female) in the urban centres was also a potential cause of instability.⁹⁴ Security remained fragile in the diamond-mining areas where thuggish youth groups took advantage of the fragility of government control while state structures had begun their progressive redeployment. The most serious threat to stability came from the armed strife which was raging in Liberia opposing Taylor's loyalists to a rebel group. Liberian combatants often retreated to the border areas of Sierra Leone and Guinea.⁹⁵

The Secretary-General noted that downsizing the mission while consolidating peace and addressing remaining challenges would require 'careful assessment and balancing'. The mission's adjustments should avoid creating a security vacuum. Progress in building the capacity of the Sierra Leonean police and army would be the key security benchmark. Other benchmarks to minimise the security challenges included the reintegration of former combatants, the consolidation of state authority and the restoration of government control over diamond-mining areas. Progress towards the resolution of Liberia's conflict was also an important benchmark.⁹⁶

The drawdown plan proposed to the Council was elaborated by UNAMSIL after consultations with the government and all significant partners on the ground. The envisaged downsizing of the military component was based on various security scenarios. The worst-case scenario could emerge if there

⁹³ Fifteenth Report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone, S/2002/987, 5 September 2002.

⁹⁴ For a study of the link between youth unemployment and insecurity in West Africa, see 'Youth unemployment and regional insecurity in West Africa', United Nations Office for West Africa (UNOWA), December 2005.

⁹⁵ Ibid.

⁹⁶ Ibid.

was 'no satisfactory progress in building up the capacity of the army and police, and if the threat from Liberia [became] more critical'. It envisaged a drawdown process extending for a considerable period of time. The most likely scenario would entail a 'drawdown over a period of approximately two years, with withdrawal largely completed by December 2004' if sufficient investments were made in developing the Sierra Leone police and army capabilities.⁹⁷

In the first phase, the Secretary-General proposed a reduction of 600 troops by the end of 2002. In the second, 4,000 would withdraw while the remaining 13,000 would be concentrated in key threat areas. Responsibility for the vacated areas would be taken over by government forces. In the third phase, UNAMSIL would pull back from the hinterland to the Freetown and Lungi peninsulas. Troop levels would fall to 5,000 by late 2004. In the final phase, 2,000 military personnel would stay on, their exit depending on the security situation. The civilian police would increase from 60 to 185 personnel to provide assistance to the national police in recruitment, training of trainers, planning and deployment plans.⁹⁸

2. Security Council support to the gradual and careful drawdown of UNAMSIL

The Security Council agreed to the drawdown plan with only a few adjustments. Resolution 1436 of 24 September 2002 '[urged] UNAMSIL [...] to complete phases 1 and 2 of the Secretary-General's plan, including a reduction of 4,500 troops within eight months [...] and [requested] the Secretary-General to report to the Council at the end of each phase, [...] and to make any necessary recommendations'.⁹⁹ The resolution supported the deployment of up to 170 civilian police in UNAMSIL.¹⁰⁰ The authorised increase fell short of the 185 that was requested by the Secretary-General, but was nevertheless a significant boost.

In his report of 17 March 2003, the Secretary-General observed that 'developments over recent months [had] proved the prudence of pursuing gradual drawdown of the Mission' and noted that 'a Government capacity to maintain internal and external security without any assistance from UNAMSIL [had] yet to be attained'.¹⁰¹ A serious security incident occurred in early 2003: a group of former soldiers attacked a military barrack's armoury in East Freetown. Police investigation uncovered a plan involving ex-combatants and some serving soldiers to destabilise the state and prevent the Special Court from discharging its mandate.¹⁰²

⁹⁷ Ibid.

⁹⁸ Ibid.

⁹⁹ United Nations Security Council resolution 1436 of 24 September 2002.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

¹⁰¹ Seventeenth Report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone, S/2003/321, 17 March 2003.

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On 28 March 2003, the Security Council adopted resolution 1470, which urged UNAMSIL to complete phase 2 of the drawdown plan and embark on phase 3 as soon as practicable, and requested the Secretary-General to propose detailed plans for the remainder of the plan, including options for faster or slower withdrawal, depending on security and the capacity of the national security sector to take responsibility.¹⁰³ In his eighteenth report to the Council, dated 23 June 2003, the Secretary-General gave an update on progress in the key benchmarks. The UNAMSIL military component had been reduced from 17,500 to 13,074 by 1 June 2003, as planned in phase 2 of the drawdown plan.¹⁰⁴

The Secretary-General presented three options. The 'accelerated drawdown option' would see all UNAMSIL troops leaving the country by June 2004. 'The delayed drawdown option' would see complete withdrawal by June 2005. The third option, called 'modified status quo drawdown option', would modify the pace and completion of drawdown by December 2004. The Secretary-General noted that 'the gradual and carefully calibrated approach to the drawdown of UNAMSIL [...] [was] yielding the desired benefits'.¹⁰⁵ But the pace of progress on benchmarks 'gave no cause for optimism that any accelerated implementation of the [...] plan would be advisable'. He recommended the third option. The Council agreed, adopting resolution 1492 of 18 July 2003.

On 19 March 2004, the twenty-first report on UNAMSIL relayed the findings of an interdepartmental assessment mission which had visited the country in February 2004. The team saw good progress in attaining the key security benchmarks, but found that the country's institutions would still need strong support after December 2004. The target level of 9,500 for the national police strength could not be met before mid-2005 and coping with the payment of salaries and the maintenance of equipment would remain a challenge. The situation of the army was also worrying due to a significant funding shortfall for the construction of army barracks and priority communications equipment.¹⁰⁶

Possible options included the total withdrawal of UNAMSIL, leaving UN and other agencies to assist the government's peace consolidation efforts and bilateral partners to support the security sector; the extension of UNAMSIL's mandate with a large military and police component; and the retention of a reconfigured residual UN peace presence. After consultations, the assessment team and the Secretary-General recommended the latter option. The post-UNAMSIL office would assist Sierra Leone to assume its full responsibilities on security; reassure the population; deter potential threats; support the Special Court; backstop the police and army in protecting the volatile eastern border; and monitor the situation to provide early warning on potentially destabilising developments.¹⁰⁷

¹⁰² It appeared that Johnny Paul Koroma, former leader of the AFRC fighting group and an elected member of the Parliament was implicated in the attack. On 10 March 2003, the prosecutor of the Special Court announced the indictments of key actors of the civil war including Foday Sankoh, Johnny Paul Koroma, Sam Bockarie, Issa Sesay and Sam Hinga Norman, who was Minister of Internal Affairs and coordinated the pro-governmental Civil Defence Force during the war.

¹⁰³ United Nations Security Council resolution 1470 of 28 March 2003.

¹⁰⁴ Eighteenth Report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone, S/2003/663, 23 June 2003.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁶ Twenty-first Report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone, S/2004/228, 19 March 2004.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*

The Secretary-General proposed to keep some 1,500 blue helmets for no more than two months after the end of UNAMSIL to facilitate the transition. The follow-on mission would have 3,250 troops plus 141 military observers to be deployed in the west (including Freetown, where the Special Court is located), the east (the border and diamond-mining areas) and the centre (where the CDF militia remained a threat despite formal disarmament and demobilisation). The Sierra Leonean police force still required 80 civilian police. The civilian component of the follow-on mission would have neither DDR nor an electoral unit, since relevant remaining tasks would be transferred to UNDP and the UN country team.

The Council agreed to the Secretary-General's proposals. In resolution 1537 of 30 March 2004 it approved a residual UNAMSIL presence for an initial period of six months, reducing the military strength to a new ceiling of 3,250 troops, 141 military observers and 80 civilian police. The Council urged the government 'to intensify its efforts to develop an effective and sustainable police force, army, penal system and independent judiciary'.¹⁰⁸ Through resolution 1562 of 17 September 2004, acting under Chapter VII of the Charter, the Council defined the tasks of UNAMSIL's residual presence.

Military and police personnel would monitor the security situation; support the national army and police in patrolling the border and diamond-mining areas; monitor their capacity; support the police in maintaining internal security and security for the Special Court; assist with its recruitment, training and mentoring programme; and protect UN personnel, installations and equipment. The Council authorised UNAMSIL's residual presence to 'use all necessary means to carry out its mandate'. The civilian components would monitor the repatriation, resettlement and reintegration of ex-combatants from abroad; monitor, investigate and promote human rights; disseminate information on the mandate; and monitor progress towards consolidation of state authority throughout the country.¹⁰⁹

The twenty-fifth report on UNAMSIL (26 April 2005), made a new assessment of the situation, including the regional dimension marked by the deployment of peacekeeping missions in Liberia (UNMIL) and in Côte d'Ivoire (UNOCI).¹¹⁰ The presence in Sierra Leone of the International Military Advisory and Training Team (IMATT), led by the UK, and expected to stay at least until 2010, gave a strong signal of continuity in the commitment to security sector reform. The deployment of a large peacekeeping mission in Liberia to support the transition after the forced exit of Charles Taylor enhanced prospects for stability. The Secretary-General recommended an extension of the residual UNAMSIL presence until the end of 2005 and a strong presence thereafter to assist peacebuilding efforts. In the addendum to the report, the Secretary-General set out his recommendations on the mandate and the structure of UNAMSIL's successor; the United Nations Integrated Office in Sierra Leone.¹¹¹

Security Council resolution 1620 of 31 August 2005 endorsed these recommendations. It authorised the establishment of UNIOSIL with a mandate of assisting the government in building the capacity of

¹⁰⁸ United Nations Security Council resolution 1537 of 30 March 2004.

¹⁰⁹ United Nations Security Council resolution 1562 of 17 September 2004.

¹¹⁰ Twenty-fifth Report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone, S/2005/273, 26 April 2005.

¹¹¹ Twenty-fifth Report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone, Addendum, S/2005/273/Add.2, 28 July 2005.

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state institutions, addressing the root causes of conflict and accelerating progress towards the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs); establishing a national human rights commission; enhancing good governance, transparency and accountability; building the NEC to conduct free, fair and credible elections in 2007; strengthening the security sector; and working for the protection and well-being of youth, women and children.¹¹² UNIOSIL was to be headed by an Executive Representative of the Secretary-General, who would also serve as the UNDP Resident Representative and the UN Humanitarian Coordinator to ensure cohesiveness of all UN agencies, programmes and funds.

3. Celebrating UNAMSIL's success at the end of a six-year presence

In December 2005, the Secretariat and the Security Council celebrated the good job done by UNAMSIL. The Secretary-General submitted his twenty-seventh and final report on UNAMSIL. It said, 'As UNAMSIL departs from Sierra Leone, it leaves behind a country that has great potential to achieve lasting stability, democracy and prosperity.' Over the six years of its operations, it forged a partnership, with the UN country team, countries of the sub-region, donors, humanitarian organisations, Sierra Leone's civil society and government, which has placed the country on a firm path to post-conflict recovery. The human rights situation was improving, and efforts to promote national cohesion, reconciliation and tolerance were making progress. Sierra Leone had achieved sustained economic recovery and started building peaceful and beneficial relations with its neighbours. UNAMSIL, it concluded, 'has therefore successfully completed its peacekeeping mandate'.¹¹³

The Secretary-General also recalled 'the trials and tribulations faced by the Mission during the crisis in 2000, the measures taken to reverse its fortunes' and hailed the remarkable later achievements. UNAMSIL was a test case in a number of areas in UN peacekeeping and the first on several grounds: 'rehatting' of a sub-regional peacekeeping force; entering into an 'over-the-horizon' backstopping arrangement with a member state (the UK); introducing the concept of integrated mission with a triple-hatted Deputy Special Representative; developing an exit strategy based on a 'carefully calibrated' gradual drawdown of its military component; establishing strong cooperation with sister peacekeeping missions in the sub-region; and being followed by an integrated office with a comprehensive peacebuilding mandate.¹¹⁴ Sierra Leone would be a 'guinea-pig'¹¹⁵ for UN innovations as one of the first two countries on the agenda of the new Peacebuilding Commission.

When the Council met to discuss the last report on UNAMSIL, all of its members hailed the mission as one of the UN's successes and invited the organisation to draw lessons from that experience. Council members highlighted the combination of political will and resources, the deployment of a

¹¹² United Nations Security Council resolution 1620 of 31 August 2005.

¹¹³ Twenty-seventh Report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone, 12 December 2005.

¹¹⁴ Ibid.

¹¹⁵ The term was used by a FRIDE interlocutor who follows particularly Sierra Leone, New York, December 2008.

robust mission, the fight against impunity illustrated by the Special Court in parallel with the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, the high leadership quality, as well as the 'triangular partnership between the regional organisations, the troop-contributors and the United Nations', and the definition of benchmarks to provide direction, measure progress and determine the time to withdraw.¹¹⁶

V. Implementation of resolution 1325 (2000)

I. Protection and participation of women in the context of the conflict in Sierra Leone

Sierra Leone had endured a devastating conflict for eight years before the Security Council considered sending a full-fledged peacekeeping mission. The conflict was an example of the 'new' generation of wars characterised by violence targeted at civilians and perpetrated by some or all the armed parties. As noted by the Truth and Reconciliation final report, the conflict 'was particularly horrific because of the scope and severity of atrocities targeted at civilians'.¹¹⁷ Women and girls paid an especially heavy toll. Though there is no reliable data on the number of victims of gender-based violence in the course of the war, the incredible extent of the violence inflicted on women and girls is acknowledged by everybody in Sierra Leone.¹¹⁸ But the just appreciation of this dimension of the conflict came quite late. As a January 2002 Human Rights Watch report put it:

*Sexual violence has remained Sierra Leone's silent war crime. [...] The underreporting is a reflection of the low status of women and girls [...] as well as the [...] shame that survivors suffer and their fear of rejection by family and communities. Women and girls in Sierra Leone are subjected to structural discrimination by practice, custom and law.*¹¹⁹

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission noted that 'many women took on the role of perpetrators and/or collaborators, out of personal conviction or simply in order to survive'. The National Commission for Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration (NCDDR) recorded 4,751 girls in the DDR process, but the real number of female combatants was much higher: Some findings estimated that 12,056 out of 48,216 child soldiers were girls.¹²⁰ The young female combatants, like a great number

¹¹⁶ 'Security Council commends peacekeeping mission's contribution to Sierra Leone's recovery as it approaches 31 December exit', *Security Council Press Release*, SC/8592, 20 December 2005.

¹¹⁷ Report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Sierra Leone, 2004, available at <http://www.trcsierraleone.org/dr-website/publish/index.shtml>

¹¹⁸ The TRC report mentioned the figure of 275,000 victims of sexual violence estimated by Human Rights Watch in its report on gender-based violence during the conflict in Sierra Leone: 'We'll Kill You if you Cry: Sexual Violence in the Sierra Leone Conflict', *Human Rights Watch Report* 15, 1 (a), January 2003.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*

¹²⁰ Report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Sierra Leone, *op.cit.*

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of their male counterparts, had been victims of forced recruitment and physical and psychological violence before becoming perpetrators of violence and atrocities themselves.

Women were historically excluded from politics and decision-making in Sierra Leone. Centralisation of power, violence and patriarchal attitudes marginalised women despite their contribution to economic activities and the subsistence of local communities. The failure of post-independence governments to meet the population's basic needs led women to organise in their communities to improve their welfare. As violence grew in the early 1990s, women's voices were increasingly heard in the wider context of an emerging civil society. In 1994, non-political women created the Women's Forum as a discussion group. Initially focusing on the upcoming UN Conference on Women in Beijing, its attention was later drawn to the civil war raging in rural areas and with no end in sight. The Sierra Leone Women's Movement for Peace was formed in 1995 to promote the restoration of peace. Women, it argued, were 'natural peacemakers who could bring unique skills to resolving the conflict'.¹²¹

The movement played a strong role in preparations for the National Consultative Conferences of August 1995 and the February 1996 elections. Women leaders called elections 'an essential and fundamental part of the peace process', despite renewed violence, and demanded a 50 per cent participation in any delegation set up to negotiate an agreement.¹²² But this would never happen. As a women's rights advocate wrote, 'women believed that their hard work in the democratisation process would be rewarded by places at the negotiating table, but politicians recognised that the ideas and attitudes thrown up by the women's movement had the potential of destabilising traditional politics, so they discouraged further participation.'¹²³ From 1997, women's groups lost most of their influence on the peace process. Only two women participated in the negotiation of the Lomé Agreement.¹²⁴ The only reference to women in the Lomé Agreement was in the article 'Post-War Rehabilitation and Reconstruction':

*Given that women have been particularly victimised during the war, special attention shall be accorded to their needs and potentials in formulating and implementing national rehabilitation, reconstruction and developments programmes, to enable them to play a central role in the moral, social and physical reconstruction of Sierra Leone.*¹²⁵

¹²¹ Yasmin Jusu-Sheriff, 'Sierra Leonean women and the peace process', in *Paying the Price, The Sierra Leone Peace Process, Accord*, Issue 9, 2000, Conciliation Resources.

¹²² Ibid.

¹²³ Ibid.

¹²⁴ Report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Sierra Leone, op.cit.

¹²⁵ Article XXVIII of the Lomé Agreement between the Government of Sierra Leone and the Revolutionary United Front, 7 July 1999.

2. Resolution 1325 (2000) on women, peace and security

Resolution 1270 (1999) creating UNAMSIL was adopted one year before the Council's adoption of resolution 1325 (2000). It made very limited reference to gender, but UNAMSIL had 'to afford protection to civilians under imminent threat of physical violence', a prescription that included protection from sexual violence. The only mention of gender in resolution 1270 (1999) was to underline the importance of including personnel with appropriate training, 'including [on] child and gender-related provisions, negotiation and communication skills, cultural awareness and civilian-military coordination'.¹²⁶

Resolution 1370 (2001) carried a significant improvement in the identification as human rights abuses of 'widespread violation of the human rights of women and children, including sexual violence', demanding 'that these acts cease immediately', and requesting the Secretary-General 'to ensure that all human rights monitoring positions within UNAMSIL [were] filled'.¹²⁷ The resolution made a first reference to the involvement of women in peacemaking efforts: it '[welcomed] the positive impact of progress made in the Sierra Leone peace process on the situation in the Mano River basin [...] and in this regard, [encouraged] the efforts of the Mano River Union Women's Peace Network'.¹²⁸ The network, known by its acronym MARWOPNET, had been actively promoting peace in the region and lobbying for peace before leaders of Sierra Leone, Liberia, Guinea, ECOWAS, Western diplomats and the UN.¹²⁹

Security Council resolution 1400 of 28 March 2002 continued to 'encourage' the network's contribution to regional peace, expressed concern at the violence, 'particularly sexual violence, suffered by women and children during the conflict' and stressed the importance of addressing these issues effectively. It requested the Secretary-General to provide a further assessment of human rights abuses, 'particularly regarding the situation of women and children who [had] suffered during the conflict'. Resolution 1436 of 24 September 2002 encouraged the government to pay special attention to the needs of women and children affected by the war. Two years after resolution 1325 (2000), the references to the protection from gender-based violence, gender mainstreaming and higher participation of women in post-conflict activities remained minimal and vague.

When the mission entered the drawdown phase, the language on gender disappeared from Council resolutions. Resolution 1562 (2004), which defined the tasks of the residual UNAMSIL presence, made no reference to gender. Resolution 1620 (2005), which defined the mandate of UNIPSIL, only asked the new presence to assist the government to develop 'initiatives for the protection and well-being of youth, women and children' among many other tasks. Given the exceptionally high toll paid by

¹²⁶ United Nations Security Council resolution 1270 of 22 October 1999, para. 15.

¹²⁷ United Nations Security Council resolution 1370 of 18 September 2001, para. 4.

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*, para. 12.

¹²⁹ FRIDE interview with an active member of MARWOPNET and commissioner at the Human Rights Commission, Freetown, November 2008.

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women and girls during the war and their marginalisation from decision-making, a more visible focus on gender issues could have been expected. UNAMSIL's exit strategy had been careful and well thought out in terms of the progressive transfer of security responsibilities to the national army and police and their training to assume such tasks, but it was not gender-sensitive.

The first explicit reference to resolution 1325 (2000) appeared one year after UNIOSIL's establishment. Resolution 1734 of 22 December 2006 '[emphasised] the important role of women in the prevention and resolution of conflicts and in peacebuilding, as recognised in resolution 1325 (2000), [underlined] that a gender perspective should be taken into account in implementing all aspects of the mandate of UNIOSIL, [welcomed] the action plan developed by UNIOSIL, [encouraged] UNIOSIL to work with the Government [...] in [that] area, and [requested] the Secretary-General to ensure [...] adequate capacity, expertise and resources [...] to carry out [that] work'. The resolution '[requested] the Secretary-General [...] to include in his reporting to the Council progress on gender mainstreaming [...] and all other aspects relating to the situation of women and girls, especially in relation to the need to protect them from gender-based violence'. When the Security Council decided the establishment of UNIPSIL in the context of the work of the Peacebuilding Commission in Sierra Leone, it emphasised in its resolution 1829 of 4 August 2008 'the important role of women in the prevention and resolution of conflicts and in peacebuilding, as recognised in resolutions 1325 (2000) and 1820 (2008)'; and '[underlined] that a gender perspective should be taken into account in implementing all aspects of the mandate of UNIPSIL, and [encouraged] UNIPSIL to work with the Government of Sierra Leone in [that] regard.'¹³⁰


The absence of a significant reference to gender in the Council resolutions throughout most of UNAMSIL's existence did nothing to promote gender sensitivity among peacekeepers. At the request of the DPKO gender adviser at headquarters, a consultant conducted an evaluation of UNAMSIL's gender mainstreaming work and impact in the final months of the mission. The report noted that 'the mission had embarked on "substantial efforts at gender mainstreaming"' but the approach 'fell short of a holistic strategy and, therefore, inhibited the realisation of the Mission's full potential in gender work and impact in the country'.¹³¹ Although UNAMSIL at one point had 18,000 staff (military and civilian), it had only one full-time gender adviser, from 2003 to the end of the mission. Before that it had an 'acting gender focal point who combined this role with another function in the mission's human rights section'.¹³² This position limited the adviser's access to the senior leadership until her relocation to the SRSG's office in March 2005, nine months before UNAMSIL's departure. At the peak of the mission 30 per cent of UNAMSIL's staff were women, most of them within the mission's civilian staff.¹³³

The gender adviser's tasks were: capacity-building through training within and outside the mission; information dissemination; provision of technical advice; serving in gender task forces, notably for the TRC and the Special Court; and partnerships with other UN agencies and international non-

¹³⁰ United Nations Security Council resolution 1829 of 4 August 2008.

¹³¹ Eugenia Date-Bah (Consultant), 'Evaluation of Gender Mainstreaming Work and Impact of United Nations Assistance Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL)', Final Report prepared for DPKO, 19 April 2006.

¹³² Ibid.



governmental organisations (NGOs). The evaluation report noted that the SRSG who was in the mission in its final phase was committed to gender mainstreaming. He informally advised the government to appoint women in such key positions as the head of the NEC, and made regular references to gender equity in his speeches.¹³⁴ But gender sensitiveness only began making progress when the mission was focused on its drawdown process. UNIOSIL failed to put gender on its list of its priorities. As highlighted above, the resolution authorising UNIOSIL in August 2005 did not mention resolution 1325 (2000). UNIOSIL would later take gender issues more seriously, developing a plan for its implementation.

The DDR programme was 'gender blind': it did not address the training needs of female ex-combatants. They were considered the 'dependants' of males who kept control of the lives of their 'bush wives'. A former officer of the national DDR programme said she had never heard of resolution 1325 (2000) at the time of implementation and that such was the case for the entire DDR workforce.¹³⁵ The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) launched a project called 'The Girls Left Behind' in 2004 to assist some 3,000 girls who had not been included in the programme.¹³⁶ The first broad consultation on resolution 1325 (2000) was held in August 2005 in Freetown and was later replicated in Makeni, the main town of the Northern Province. However, the gender adviser left before other provinces were covered. Sierra Leone's Ministry of Social Welfare was exposed to resolution 1325 (2000) for the first time in 2005, five years after its adoption.

The lack of a holistic approach to gender was highlighted by various interlocutors. The mission did little work with human rights and women's rights organisations to raise awareness on gender-based violence and promote women's rights. Most members of women's organisations and other civil society groups interviewed in Freetown in November 2008 emphasised the good work done by UNAMSIL in providing public information on gender, beginning with addressing the issue of sexual violence through Radio UNAMSIL.¹³⁷ The essential role of this instrument in large and complex peacekeeping operations should be fully recognised. The radio gave a lot of space for debate on pervasive discrimination against women and offered women's groups an outlet to speak out. UNAMSIL's radio and public information campaigns also played a significant role in encouraging women's participation as voters and candidates to the elections.

On the negative side, the issues more frequently mentioned were lack of funding and long delays in the reparation of victims of war-related sexual violence; the sexual exploitation and abuses committed by

¹³³ In November 2005, the international staff comprised 152 men and 65 women; the local staff was made up of 410 men and only 65 women. Only 13 out of the 2,085 military at post were women, most of them from Nigeria. 'Since the onus of responsibility for the recruitment of women in uniformed peacekeeping functions lies with the troop-contributing countries, the fact of their not having a gender balance in their local troops obviously implied inability to contribute gender balanced troops to any peacekeeping mission'. Ibid.

¹³⁴ This was confirmed by some of the interviews held in Freetown in November 2008 with civil society organisations.

¹³⁵ FRIDE interview, e-mail communication with a former officer of the DDR programme and current government official, December 2008.

¹³⁶ UNICEF, 'The Impact of Conflict on Women and Girls in West and Central Africa and the Unicef Response', February 2005.

¹³⁷ FRIDE interviews in Freetown, November 2008.

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peacekeepers themselves (both military and civilian, even at high levels); prostitution, and HIV/AIDS epidemics; the issue of the babies left behind by peacekeepers and the social and economic implications for their mothers; and, again, the lack of a clear strategy to address gender issues as a key component of peacebuilding and reconstruction. Beyond the repeated statements about the Secretary-General's 'zero tolerance policy' for misconduct by peacekeepers, it is essential that the Council and DPKO realise that their commitment to gender mainstreaming is not credible if care and reparations for the victims of sexual exploitation and abuses by UN peacekeepers are not taken seriously. The social consequences of having a predominantly male international operation in poor countries where women and girls are severely exposed should be fully addressed, and concrete corrective actions should be envisaged in all missions' exit strategies.

While there is now wide awareness of gender issues and their importance for the well-being of the country, including its security, the dire material situation of the Ministry of Social Welfare, Gender and Children's Affairs is a telling indication of the challenges ahead. The lack of qualified human resources and material resources is a major problem. The country's recent history calls for a gender-sensitive allocation of resources. UNAMSIL did little, partly because it took almost five years for resolution 1325 (2000) to make its way from New York to Freetown. UNIOSIL's initial mandate neglected the gender dimension, but at a later stage it played a noticeable role in support of the 'Gender Bills' on Registration of Customary Marriage and Divorce, Domestic Violence and Devolution of Estates, enacted in June 2007.¹³⁸

The United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM), other international organisations and regional civil society organisations, such as the Women Peace and Security Network Africa (WIPSEN-Africa), developed various projects to strengthen local NGOs working on the protection of women's rights. A national action plan for the implementation of resolution 1325 (2000) is, however, yet to be prepared. Since Sierra Leone remains on the agenda thanks to the Peacebuilding Commission and the establishment of UNIPSIL by Security Council resolution 1829 (2008), a much-needed holistic approach to gender should be an area of immediate work by UNIPSIL and the Government of Sierra Leone.

VI. Concluding observations

The review of the mission's history through events on the ground, the Secretary-General's reports and the Council's debates and resolutions, and the interviews with relevant actors held in Sierra Leone and in New York led to some interesting observations. UNAMSIL's initial weaknesses can be explained by the following reasons:

- The optimistic assumption that parties would abide by their commitments in the Lomé Agreement, accept the deployment of a neutral peacekeeping force in diamond-rich areas under their control and the presumed good faith of RUF leader Foday Sankoh;

¹³⁸ FRIDE interview with officials of the Ministry of Social Welfare, Gender and Children's Affairs, November and December 2008.

- Lack of a decisive reaction to early provocations by RUF, and a revision of optimistic assumptions on the security environment and the conditions of UNAMSIL's deployment;
- The difficulties for a UN peacekeeping force in a country where a regional power (Nigeria) was leading a costly military intervention; the precipitated 'rehatting' of ECOMOG soldiers as UN blue helmets and the fight for the mission's leadership between those who were there before (Nigerian officers) and the newcomers (Indian officers);
- Operational issues related to slow deployment; the initial insufficient number of authorised troops; the inadequate training and equipment of some key contingents; problems of interpretation of the mandate and the rules of engagement by some peacekeepers; and problems in UNAMSIL's command and control structures in early 2000.

The reversal of fortunes from mid-2000 to UNAMSIL's withdrawal can be attributed to:

- The UK's immediate military intervention and show of force, which secured the airport, allowed UNAMSIL's reinforcement and sent a clear message to the spoilers of peace;
- The determination of the Secretary-General, most heads of state in ECOWAS, the Security Council and UNAMSIL troop-contributing countries not to allow a new failure of the UN peacekeeping system which would have further undermined its credibility;
- UNAMSIL's strengthening, restructuring and leadership changes in line with an independent assessment, a frank acknowledgement of such weaknesses by the Secretary-General and the Council, and follow-up on the implementation of the recommended redressing measures;
- Unanimity of the Council on the need to save UNAMSIL and Council activism, since mid-2000, leading to the adoption of a series of resolutions to increase UNAMSIL's resources; pressures put on Charles Taylor's government as the main supporter of the RUF; approval of a Special Court and of almost all the Secretary-General's recommendations;
- Continuous diplomatic efforts of ECOWAS heads of state and their pressure on Taylor to cease financial and military support for the RUF;
- The neutralisation of Sankoh after his arrest in Freetown, and the common regional position to demand his replacement as RUF leader;
- The unequivocal evidence provided by the UN Group of Experts of the support given to RUF by Liberia's and Burkina Faso's governments; the subsequent sanctions on Liberia and the change of behaviour of the identified regional spoilers;
- The strong Guinean military reaction to RUF attacks, which closed the option of displacing the war to Guinean territory and severely weakened the RUF;

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- The long-term commitment to reform of the security sector by the International Military and Advisory Training Team under UK lead, which allowed UNAMSIL to focus on other areas and transfer security responsibilities to newly-trained and equipped troops;
- An exit strategy conditioned on specific benchmarks, and the Security Council's approval of the gradual approach recommended by the Secretary-General.

The recipe for success in Sierra Leone could be summarised by quoting a member of the Security Council: 'the alignment of political will with resources'. There was a unanimous determination not to permit failure and not to abandon the country to its fate. Unanimity also existed on the need for a strong peacekeeping force to back diplomatic efforts that would bring the RUF to the negotiated settlement and disarm voluntarily. Approving up to 17,500 troops in a West African country of around 5 million people and 71,740 square kilometres was a sign of rare commitment from the Security Council. An equivalent effort in 2008 for the Democratic Republic of the Congo (a population of 62 million and an area of 2,344,858 square kilometres) would have meant sending 217,000 blue helmets on the basis of the population ratio, or some 572,000 troops on the basis of area. The authorised number of UN troops in that country at the end of 2008 was 19,815. The UN Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) – with a military strength of 15,250, at its highest point, in a country with a population of 3.4 million and an area of 111,369 square kilometres – thanks to US support, is the only case in Africa which can be compared with Sierra Leone's.

A mission's military strength is certainly no guarantee of effective mandate implementation, but it does make a difference. In Sierra Leone, successive reinforcements of UNAMSIL in terms of troops, equipments and management changes, along with the UK's assistance to the Sierra Leonean army, overwhelmed the spoilers of peace. The weakness of President Kabbah and the army made security dependent on international support. UNAMSIL had only one identifiable troublemaker, the RUF rebellion, which had a bad reputation, no convincing political agenda, and only limited support from regional leaders and a powerful Council member. The president had little to fear from a massive UN involvement in state affairs. The mandate of UNAMSIL to 'assist the government' in a variety of tasks was tantamount to asking UNAMSIL to do the job itself with assistance from a weak government and fragile national institutions.

The near collapse of UNAMSIL still carries lessons in 2009 as UN peacekeeping faces enormous challenges. The initial failure of the Chapter VII mission is a reminder of the need to anticipate the risk of blatant violations of the peace agreements that are often at the base of the Council's decision to deploy a peacekeeping operation. Compliance with their commitments under an agreement by their signatories is just one of the possible scenarios and not necessarily the most likely one. In the Sierra Leonean case, the record of RUF and Sankoh's personality before the Lomé Agreement should have signalled the possibility of a radical shift in the rebel movement's future behaviour and the need for contingency planning. The usual assertion that UN peacekeepers should intervene only when there is peace to keep is certainly sound. But it may also be misleading and simplistic.