



FOCUS

ON

ARMS FOR DEVELOPMENT



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US\$2 Million Dollar Agreement For Arms Collection In Liberia

Monrovia, Liberia (20 March 2006): The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the Government of Japan today signed a grant agreement for 2 million US dollars at the UNDP Headquarters in Monrovia. The grant is expected to accelerate the Arms for Development programme and improve the security situation in the southeastern region of Liberia, especially those areas bordering Ivory Coast. UNDP in Liberia is implementing the United Nations Small Arm Control Project and, in consultation with the Bureau for Crisis Prevention and Recovery, has initiated a five year National Programme of Arms for Development.

Speaking on behalf of the Liberian Government, Foreign Affairs Minister, Ambassador George W. Wallace, Jr. said "ridding Liberia of weapons constitutes a top priority for this Government and replacing the weapons with useful implements is a task that the Government is clearly aware of and is prepared to execute."

The signing ceremony was also attended by several dignitaries including the Planning & Economic Affairs Minister, Dr. Toga McIntosh, Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs for International Cooperation, Hon. Commany B. Wesseh and UNDP Country Director, Mr. Steven Ursino.

The major areas of intervention under the Arms for Development programme include: the collection of illicit weapons through a voluntary surrender programme in exchange for development projects, support for the draft Firearms Control Act, and intervention to reduce cross-border trade of Small Arms & Light Weapons.



Deputy SRSG and UNDP Resident Coordinator Jordan Ryan (right) and Japanese Ambassador Masamichi Ishikawa (left) during the signing ceremony

During his remarks, the Deputy Special Representative for the Secretary-General and UNDP Resident Coordinator, Mr. Jordan Ryan thanked the Japanese Government for their support in consolidating peace in Liberia and said, "the proliferation of small arms is the key driver of violence in a society and it helps to prolong the suffering and agony of war and violence." He reiterated the United Nations commitment to work with the Government of Liberia to eradicate illegal weapons and to create an environment where human development can be sustained. Ryan stressed that "now is the time to get rid of weapons and get on with development."



Foreign Minister Ambassador George Wallace (right) speaking during the ceremony

Ambassador Ishikawa noted that his government was pleased "that the activities under the programme are aimed towards supporting the economic development of the communities through the implementation of development projects and the provision of alternative means of livelihood, social rehabilitation by strengthening community cohesion and improvement of human security by removing illicit weapons." He also expressed the hope that sufficient awareness and public education on small arms and community arms collection would be created to encourage the people of Liberia to give up their weapons.

The project will also adopt a multi-faceted strategy focusing on raising community awareness through sensitization and mobilization to promote socio-economic development and stigmatize the use, production and trade of small arms while promoting voluntary surrender and destruction of non-licensable firearms, supporting capacity building at the grass roots level, national commission, civil society and local authorities in socio-economic development and conflict resolution and ensuring long-term sustainability by linking grass root initiative to national policies.



The Netherlands

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