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7,000 Ex-Combatants to Benefit from Livelihood Skills

United Nations Development Programme (New York)

PRESS RELEASE

8 October 2008

Posted to the web 8 October 2008

Monrovia

President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf has extolled ex-combatants for denouncing violence and taking advantage of formal education and vocational training programs offered by the National Commission on Disarmament, Demobilization, Reintegration and Rehabilitation (NCDDRR) to contribute to the reconstruction and development of Liberia. She said the reintegration and rehabilitation programme is intended to provide livelihood skills to ex-combatants and make them productive partners in the development of Liberia.

Addressing 500 ex-combatants at the launched of the final phase of the reintegration and rehabilitation component of the DDDR programme held at the Monrovia vocational Training Center in Monrovia on Monday, President Johnson Sirleaf said, "Liberia is proud of this remarkable achievement and your action represents the spirit of the Accra Peace Accord". The Liberian leader called on the business community to prioritize employment of ex-combatants who have completed the full circle of training. She said this will serve as an inducement and send a message that there is a dividend for peace.

The final phase of the reintegration and rehabilitation program is targeting 7,000 ex-combatants who did not benefit from any training during the first phase of the programme. Funded to the tune of \$7 million dollars by the Government of Norway, the programme will be implemented in the fifteen counties. About 39% of the current beneficiaries are women.

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The Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary General Mr. Jordan Ryan said Liberia is on the forward march to peace and development but for all citizens to benefit from this peace "you must denounce violence and embrace peace and use your skills for the development that Liberia needs". He said donors are looking at ways to join-up their assistance to support ongoing efforts in providing the right skills. "The inclusion of psychosocial counseling in the programme is essential in that people are not only train but they will have an understanding of their commitment to the society", he added.

Mr. Ryan said the involvement of line ministries including education, health, agriculture and youth and sports and the private sector is a demonstration that the partners are exerting every effort to ensure that the ex-combatants receive the right skills for the job market.

The Norwegian Consul General to Liberia Mr. Horst Wallwitz said durable and lasting peace is crucial for Liberia's transformation process. He said priority must be given to the employment of youth to prevent the country from sliding back into conflict. He called on the ex-combatants to take advantage of the reintegration and rehabilitation programme and engage in the development process.

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