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PRESS RELEASE

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Flower Power: U.S. Embassy and Africell Award Prizes to Student Environmental Artists

U.S. Ambassador Michael S. Owen and Africell CEO Shadi Al-Gerjawi awarded prizes to student artists during a ceremony at the U.S. Embassy in Freetown. The students represented eight local primary schools which participated in a drawing contest on the theme of “My Healthy Environment” held at the Embassy in late April to celebrate Earth Day 2012. The top three prize winners each received a check from Africell for two million Leones (USD 463) toward payment of school fees. Africell also provided book bags and school supplies to all 23 children who took part in the contest. In addition, the SBTS Group donated funds for the purchase of trophies for each of the prize winners and commemorative plaques for each of the participating schools. The Conservation Society of Sierra Leone assisted in designing guidelines for the contest and judging the best drawings.

In his remarks at the ceremony, Ambassador Owen thanked Africell and the other partners for their generosity. He also noted the importance of encouraging young people to love the natural world. “Earth Day is a time to stop and reflect on our dependence on the environment, and the importance of clean water, clean air, and robust biodiversity for our overall quality of life,” he said. “It is a time to acknowledge that we are a part *of* the earth, not apart *from* it. The pictures produced by the students who took part in the art competition are a powerful reminder of this fact. They also remind us of the wise words that we do not inherit this earth from our parents. Rather, we hold it in our trust for our children.”

Across the globe, U.S. diplomatic missions are working to increase environmental awareness, promote biodiversity, and support wise stewardship of natural resources. For more information on the U.S. Department of State’s “Greening Diplomacy Initiative,” please see <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/pl/156053.htm>.