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U.S. Ambassador Swears In New Peace Corps Volunteers

(BO, SIERRA LEONE) -- On August 17, U.S. Ambassador Michael Owen officially sworn in 44 new Peace Corps volunteers who will live and work throughout Sierra Leone. The swearing in ceremony took place at the Methodist Youth Center in Bo and marked the end of a ten-week training program for the new volunteers.

The U.S. volunteers will teach English, science and mathematics to students in junior and senior secondary schools. In academic year 2012-13, the Peace Corps will have 88 volunteers teaching throughout Sierra Leone, with an additional five short-term Peace Corps Response volunteers who will participate in a pilot teacher-training program in universities.

The ceremony was also attended by the Minister of Education, Science and Technology Dr. Minkailu Bah; the Director of the Department for the Americas and Pacific Countries in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Dr. Rosaline Turay; and leaders from various districts and cities throughout Sierra Leone.

In his remarks at the ceremony, Ambassador Owen emphasized the legacy of the U.S. Peace Corps-Sierra Leone relationship which began in 1962. He thanked the Government of Sierra Leone for their historical partnership and the invitation for the return of the Peace Corps to Sierra Leone in 2010. He also expressed gratitude to the host families and communities for their hospitality.

He spoke about the “generous spirit and unwavering dedication that Peace Corps volunteers bring” in living and working in their communities and he encouraged the volunteers to always remember the purpose of their service. “You will leave an important imprint on the lives of many Sierra Leoneans and you are now a very large part of the legacy of the U.S.-Sierra Leone friendship,” Ambassador Owen said.

The U.S. Peace Corps, an independent U.S. government agency, began with a challenge by then-Senator John F. Kennedy for Americans to serve their country in the cause of peace by living and working in developing countries. Since it began in 1961, more than 200,000 Peace Corps volunteers have served in 139 countries that have requested assistance. The volunteers work on issues ranging from AIDS education to information technology and environmental preservation.

Today, thirty-nine percent (39%) of the more than 9,000 Peace Corps volunteers worldwide serve in Africa.

For more information on the Peace Corps, go online to www.peacecorps.gov.