

DIRECTORATE OF INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION

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**HEAD OF ASEOWA AWARDED "DISTINGUISHED SERVICE ORDER" IN LIBERIA
AUC CHAIRPERSON PRAISES HIM FOR SELFLESS SPIRIT AND DEDICATION**



Addis Ababa, Ethiopia 16 February 2015- The Head of the Africa Union Support to Ebola Outbreak in West Africa (ASEOWA) Major General Dr Julius Oketta has been awarded the Decoration of "DISTINGUISHED SERVICE ORDER" (DSO) by Liberian President Mrs Ellen Johnson Sirleaf for his "dedication to duty and outstanding services rendered to the people and government of Liberia through ASEOWA".

The award was given to Dr Oketta on 11th February in Monrovia on the occasion of the 58th Armed Forces Day Celebration under the Theme: "Enhancing the Capability of the Armed Forces of Liberia to Conduct Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief Operations". Present at the ceremony were the Vice President, the Rt. Hon Speaker and members of the Liberian legislature, the Chief Justice, Ministers, Ambassadors and members of the Diplomatic Corps, Heads of Missions, Commanders of the US Army, General officers of the Armed Forces and citizens of Liberia.



Accepting the award and representing 2 Colonels from Ghana and Nigeria, and 3 American Generals who were also decorated at the same event, General Oketta praised the collective effort in fighting Ebola:

"Our collective actions under command and directions did matter, the collective military support to the civil authority in the on-going joint civil- military Ebola response, have bent history in the direction of African Union Solidarity and

the unified collective international efforts, against the heinous attacks of Ebola virus against our people, the social fiber, the economy and the overall national security interest”.

General Oketta recognized the roles played by the African Union through ASEOWA, the Liberian people, and the United Nations: “This award belongs not just to us. We do not stand here alone”, he stressed.

He also said the recognition would bring tremendous joy and encouragement to the Liberian people, “for whom we have a special responsibility in total solidarity, to support the government’s on-going efforts to liberate the people of Liberia, the Land of Liberty, from the bondage of the Ebola Virus Disease”.

Finally General Oketta said the award reinforces the belief that, with solidarity, the world can be a better place:

“With the great honor that you give us today, on this thrilling occasion, you re-enforce our firm belief that we can create a world much better than what we have done so far. Let’s believe in our solidarity, capacity building, preparedness, collective responsibility and sacrifice, and make it happen”.

General Oketta was appointed by AU Commission Chairperson Dr Nkosazana Dlamini Zuma to head ASEOWA in September 2015. In her message of congratulations sent out on 13th February Dr Dlamini Zuma praised General Oketta’s “spirit of selflessness and the full dedication with which he leads the life-saving mission in the three countries affected by the Ebola Virus Disease”.

General Oketta has extensive experience in the coordination of military support to Ebola operations, gained from his work in his native Uganda. Working with the Commission’s Department of Social Affairs, which oversees the Commission’s Ebola response, and other departments of the AUC including the Directorate of Information and Communication, General Oketta has managed an 835 strong force of African health workers fighting to defeat Ebola in Guinea, Sierra Leone and Liberia. ASEOWA’s presence has greatly contributed to the reduction of deaths and infections.

For more information on the AU’s response contact:

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