

Peacebuilding Commission
Informal Country-Specific Meeting on Sierra Leone
Local Council Elections and Energy Sector Development
February 14, 2008

Chair's Summary Note

Introduction

1. The primary purpose of this informal meeting was to get an update on the preparations for the Sierra Leone local council elections and the latest developments in the energy sector. The meeting also provided an opportunity to begin the implementation of the Sierra Leone Peacebuilding Cooperation Framework by delivering tangible results on these time sensitive priority issues. Ambassador Majoor, Permanent Representative of the Netherlands, chaired the meeting. The Government of Sierra Leone (GoSL) was represented by Hon. Zainab Bangura, Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation and Hon. Afsata Kabba, Minister of Energy and Power. The representatives of the European Commission, United Kingdom, United States, Ghana, China, Egypt, France, Germany, the World Bank, the UN and civil society also took part in the meeting, via VTC, from Freetown (see attached list of participants).
2. In his opening remarks, Ambassador Majoor noted that with the successful adoption of the Peacebuilding Cooperation Framework, the engagement of the PBC with Sierra Leone will have three primary objectives: generating buy-in for and implementation of the commitments contained in the Framework, broadening of the donor base in Sierra Leone, and triggering new activities or up-scaling of existing activities in peacebuilding priority areas. As a flexible instrument of PBC's engagement with Sierra Leone, the Framework will be reviewed and updated every six months to reflect the latest developments in the country. He expressed the hope that tangible progress on the implementation of the Framework can be made by the time of the first biannual review scheduled for June of this year.
3. Minister Bangura began by conveying greetings from H.E. President Koroma and noting that the implementation of the Peacebuilding Cooperation Framework will be discussed at the GoSL cabinet meeting on February 20. She then introduced the participants in Freetown and invited them to make presentations on the two agenda items of local council elections and the energy sector development.

Local Council Elections

4. Dr. Christiana Thorpe, Chairperson of the National Electoral Commission (NEC), gave an update on the status of the preparations for the local council elections scheduled for July 5, 2008. She noted that the boundary delimitation process has been completed and will be discussed in Parliament on February 21. She stressed that the delimitation of ward boundaries is significant since they are being reviewed for the first time in over half a century. NEC will soon begin voter registration and education process. With

preparations for the elections well underway, ensuring adequate funding for the elections is a major concern. The current funding gap stands at \$13.6 million out of a total estimate of \$24.6 million. The following donors have already made contributions or have pledged to do so: Irish Aid, DFID, EC, and Norway. A UNDP Basket Fund has been set up. In addition, the GoSL will provide \$ 3.3 million. Dr. Thorpe encouraged all international partners to consider providing financial and technical support for these elections, including through contributions to the Basket Fund.

5. Mr. Ceasar, Commissioner of the Political Parties Registration Commission (PPRC), in his intervention stressed the need to provide continued capacity building support and logistical support for the work of the PPRC and in particular the District Monitoring Committees. He also noted the need to revise the Political Parties Code of Conduct to ensure that it applies to independent candidates as well and requested legal advisory support for this task.
6. A number of PBC members participated in the discussion including: Egypt, Italy, EC, Japan, and Angola. They thanked Dr. Thorpe and Mr. Ceasar for their presentations and stressed that local council elections are critical for the consolidation of democratic gains and require full engagement and commitment from the GoSL and all international partners. Members also asked for more detailed information on the budget for the local council elections and a breakdown of the main categories of expenses. Questions were asked about the availability of a sound dispute resolution mechanism, the provisions for access to media, the modalities of the Basket Fund, and the elections related funding requirements for the Sierra Leone Police and Political Parties Registration Commission. Some members also asked whether the PBF is being considered as a possible funding source for the local elections.
7. In response to these questions, Minister Bangura noted that the Steering Committee of the PBF will resume its work after the February 20 cabinet and will be co-chaired by H.E. President Koroma. At that time the Steering Committee will consider projects in support of the energy sector and possibly local council elections. Dr. Thorpe reiterated that it is critical to avoid any delays and respect the scheduled date for the elections. She also clarified that the estimated \$ 24.6 million includes elections related funding requirements for the security institutions such as the Sierra Leone Police, the Political Parties Registration Commission and the electoral dispute resolution mechanism. On the composition of the Electoral Commission, Dr. Thorpe noted that the President has named two candidates who are currently undergoing a confirmation process in the Parliament. Mr. Haggos, OIC for UNIOSIL, gave an update on the Elections Basket Fund noting that it is possible to earmark funding contributions to the Fund. He also noted that the UN radio will be available for use by the NEC and the PPRC and will assist in information dissemination and voter education for the elections.

Energy Sector Development

8. Minister Kabba began by expressing her appreciation for the inclusion of energy sector development as a critical priority area in the Sierra Leone Peacebuilding Cooperation

Framework. She then gave an update on progress made in the implementation of the emergency energy plan, the completion of the Bambuna HEP and the remaining short and medium term challenges and gaps in this sector. As a result of the emergency plan 35 MW of electricity is being supplied to Freetown and its surrounding areas representing a significant peace dividend for the population. The financing for the completion of the Bambuna HEP has also been secured with the 12 million provided from Italy, 5 million for the GoSL, 7 million from DFID, and 6 million from AfDB (not yet disbursed) amounting to a total of 30 million euros. On February 29, H.E. President Koroma will have another meeting with international partners on the financing of Bambuna and the timeline for the completion of the project. The Ministry of Energy has developed a master plan for energy sector development and will present an energy sector policy in early March, while the Presidential Task Force on Energy is finalizing a road map for donor coordination in this sector. Despite these achievements, a number of challenges remain in the implementation of the emergency phase of the government's energy plan. Of particular concern is the state of the transmission and distribution network, weak revenue generation capacity of the National Power Authority (NPA), lack of pre-paid meters and logistical limitations of the NPA. Minister Kabba noted that there are 46 energy projects currently under review and development by her ministry in close coordination with international stakeholders.

9. A number of PBC members participated in the discussion including the UK, Egypt, India, Japan, EC, and the World Bank. In addition, two civil society representatives joined the discussion from Freetown. Member states thanked the Hon. Minister and her colleagues for the update and expressed great satisfaction at the rate of progress observed since the last meeting on energy sector in November of 2007. All members commended the GoSL for the restoration of electricity to Freetown hailing it as a critical achievement. They also asked a number of clarification questions about the funding gap for the implementation of the emergency energy plan, the level of coordination among the many stakeholders active in this sector and the possible use of the PBF funding for energy. Members noted that sequencing of initiatives need to be carefully considered in order to ensure that increased electricity generation capacity is complemented by efforts to build the capacity of the NPA for revenue generation and efforts to rehabilitate the transmission and distribution networks. In this regard, a number of members stressed the need to build the capacity of the NPA for sustainable levels of revenue generation. Egypt in particular offered to provide pre-paid meters to help in this regard. World Bank and the UK reaffirmed their commitment to stay engaged and continue to support the GoSL efforts in this sector. Representatives of civil society, in particular the women's groups reiterated their commitment to support NPA's revenue generation efforts through public education campaigns.

Conclusion and Next Steps

10. In his concluding remarks the Chair reiterated the importance of the local council elections for the consolidation of peace and good governance in Sierra Leone and encouraged all stakeholders to fully engage in the electoral preparations and ensure that the elections are held on time and in accordance with international standards. He urged

all international partners to provide adequate funding for the local council elections, including through contributions to the Elections Basket Fund. In this regard, he stressed the need to ensure that the Elections Basket Fund is managed in the most flexible and responsive manner to allow for timely disbursement of funds. The Chair also encouraged all partners to support the efforts of the Political Parties Registration Commission, the Sierra Leone Police and the National Electoral Commission by providing sustained capacity building, professional training, and operational support.

11. On the question of energy sector development, the Chair asked the secretariat, with the support of UNIOSIL, to prepare a background note with a more detailed breakdown of short term energy needs, available resources and remaining gaps. The Chair also requested additional information on the status of PRSP preparations and the plans for the next DEPAC meeting. It was agreed that an update on these issues will be provided in advance of the next CSM.
12. Under other matters, the Chair informed the members of the CSM of his intention to travel to select capitals in the next few weeks to garner support for the implementation of the Peacebuilding Framework. In particular, he noted his plans to visit the IMF and World Bank offices in Washington DC and the EC in Brussels. Jointly with Minister Bangura, the Chair noted that he will be sending letters to all major donors and potential partners to generate buy-in for the Peacebuilding Framework and invite potential contributions to its implementation.
13. Minister Bangura in her concluding remarks thanked the Chair and members of the PBC for their continued support for peace consolidation in Sierra Leone. She reiterated her commitment to support the implementation of the Peacebuilding Framework through joint advocacy initiatives with the Chair.
