

Peacebuilding Commission
Informal meeting of the Liberian Country Specific Configuration
6 October 2010

Chairperson's Summary of the Discussion

Background

On 6 October 2010, the Chairperson of the Country Configuration for Liberia, H.R.H. Prince Zeid Ra'ad Zeid Al Hussein, convened the first informal meeting of the Configuration. The Chairperson presided over the meeting. The agenda for the meeting included the following items: (1) Briefing on the PBC Mission to Liberia (16 – 27 August, 2010); and (2) other matters.

Briefing on the PBC Mission to Liberia;

The Chairperson introduced the first agenda item noting that the Liberian Government had requested for the PBC's support in three (3) areas: security sector reform, rule of law and national reconciliation. He welcomed the attendance of the SRSG, who participated via VTC as well as five new members: Denmark, Ghana, Ireland, Portugal and Sierra Leone. The Chairperson then delineated the speaking order for this agenda item as follows: United States, Liberia, SRSG, PBC Chair, PBSO and DPKO before opening the floor to the members of the Configuration.

1. Ambassador Barton (United States), who led the PBC Mission, opened by describing the situation in Liberia as a promising moment for PBC engagement in the three (3) areas identified by the Liberian Government. He then briefed the members on the findings and recommendations of the Mission. Ambassador Barton highlighted the following points:
 - a. Two strands emerged during the mission. The first could be categorized as issues, under which three main points were raised: public safety, justice and quality of life, particularly for the youth. The second is national ownership and the concept of citizenship. The interpretation of these strands was described as indicative of the significant improvements that have taken place in the last 5 to 7 years. However, despite such progress citizens have not yet felt much improvement in their daily lives. This situation has created many expectations as well as frustrations among the population, who want to be active participants in their national development.
 - b. To make peace more resilient, interventions need to be designed to fit the time. Activities need to be inspirational and evolve from an organic process that is not too technocratic. Efforts also need to build on what is currently working in the country aiming to make people feel safer and more engaged.
 - c. Towards this end, the main recommendations were summarized. A central recommendation designed to increase security and expand access to justice, is to create five (5) regional hubs while simultaneously increasing support to current security sector activities. A few key challenges were raised specifically on justice including developing a case management and tracking system; carrying out joint trainings among all components of the justice systems (e.g. police, judges, magistrates, prosecutors); establishing oversight

bodies; supporting land initiatives; and organizing information campaigns. A pilot project for youth employment was also described. Emphasis was placed on ensuring that all efforts would be sustainable.

2. Ambassador Kamara (Liberia) expressed appreciation to the Chairperson for the inclusion of additional members to the Configuration, who have been significant partners of the Liberian Government and commended the report for its insightful perspective that were gleaned through extensive consultations with an array of stakeholders. She acknowledged that while there are numerous needs in Liberia, focus on the three (3) priorities identified by the Government would be critical. She welcomed the approach to build upon existing programmes and to foster national ownership. As to the issue of land, the Ambassador flagged the urgency of the matter cautioning against carrying out a long drawn-out study and instead requested for the PBC to be clear on the type and scope of their engagement on land. She further advocated for the Statement of Mutual Commitment to be quickly adopted and for the project on regional hubs to be started before the end of 2010. Ambassador Kamara concluded by commending PBSO for having demonstrated that they are up for the task.
3. The SRSG Løj highlighted that for the PBC, Liberia would be the first situation where a peacekeeping mission is in place and called for the PBC and the Security Council to work together to ensure a successful draw-down of the mission. The transitional gaps are mostly in security sector reform and rule of law. She highlighted the enormous steps that have been taken in the last seven years commending the Government of Liberia for having defined the priorities. Two main challenges were put forth: national ownership and sustainability. The SRSG further informed that the Delivering as One for the UN in Liberia would be launched in November 2010.
4. The PBC Chair, Ambassador Wittig, expressing appreciation to the Chair and those who had spoken before him, underlined how the engagement with Liberia has the potential to delve concretely into the draw-down of the peacekeeping mission and is an opportunity to implement a number of relevant recommendations from the Review of the PBC. Representing his country, he further informed of Germany's financial commitment of an addition \$5M to the PBF.
5. The Assistance Secretary-General for Peacebuilding Support, Ms. Cheng-Hopkins, described Liberia as an opportunity in view of strong Liberian leadership, a vibrant civil society and a population eager for durable peace. Reinforcing the point made by the PBC Chair on the relevance of the Commission's engagement with Liberia at this juncture, she also encouraged members to share their countries' relevant expertise with Liberia in particular highlighting the wealth of knowledge that exist among many think tanks. She also emphasized the need to build synergies between the PBC and the PBF outlining the next steps that would be taken to adopt the Statement of Mutual Commitment as well as finalize a PBF Priority Plan, which is necessary for the release of funds. The Director and Deputy Head of PBSO, Mr. Otobo, who had led the PBC Mission during the first week, built upon the briefing by Ambassador Barton focusing on the Liberian Poverty Reduction Strategy within which peacebuilding had been incorporated as a cross-cutting issue. He also pointed out that the economic growth potential of Liberia would not be reached if security and justice were not solidly established in Liberia. He further noted that sustainability of programmes to be undertaken by PBC will not be achieved without sustained economic growth.

6. The Assistance Secretary-General in DPKO, Mr. Khare, expressed his department's interest to be fully engaged in the work of PBC, which could truly have a positive impact in addressing the priority areas. He further noted that lessons from Liberia could have relevance for other countries where a peacekeeping operation is in place.
7. Subsequent, nineteen (19) member states and a regional organization took the floor. All were appreciative of the Report with many commending it for its substantive and concrete findings. Interventions from member states revolved around seven (7) main themes:
 - a. The importance of national ownership
 - b. Concretely examining the linkages between peacekeeping and peacebuilding
 - c. Building the relationship between PBC and Security Council
 - d. Effective resource mobilization
 - e. Opportunity to test the recommendations of the PBC Review
 - f. Incorporating a regional approach
 - g. Significance of engaging youth
8. A few members highlighted the nature and scope of their support to Liberia. They also underlined that impact in Liberia would be the most important gauge for the efforts of the PBC and that needs should be detailed out in terms of costs and actions.
9. Turning to the new members, one member state questioned the membership criteria.
10. In commenting on the interventions, the Chairperson described the first meeting as a thoughtful start. He informed of his intention to share the draft Statement of Mutual Commitment in the immediate future. He is aiming to hold the second meeting of the Configuration by the end of the month in order to review the Statement in time for its adoption in the first half of November when he will be undertaking a visit to Liberia. With reference to the role of the Liberian Government to lead the preparation of the Priority Plan and to ensure its detailed nature, the Chairperson further announced his intention for the Priority Plan to also be ready for adoption at the same time.

Other Matters;

The Chairperson encouraged States potentially interested in joining the Liberian Country Specific Configuration to contact him.