

Peacebuilding Commission
Informal meeting of the Liberian Country Specific Configuration
16 March 2011

Chairperson's Summary of the Discussion

Background

On 15 March 2011, the Chairperson of the Country Configuration for Liberia, H.R.H. Prince Zeid Ra'ad Zeid Al Hussein, presided over the fourth informal meeting of the Configuration. The purpose of the meeting was to brief the Configuration on the Chairperson's missions to Washington, D.C., Brussels and Liberia as well to inform on his participation in the 16 March Security Council meeting on the situation in Liberia, where Special Representative of the Secretary-General (SRSG) Ellen Margrethe Løj, presented the twenty-second progress report of the Secretary-General on UNMIL. The SRSG, who was in New York at the time of the Configuration meeting, participated in the meeting.

Prior to commencing the meeting, the Chair expressed condolences on behalf of the Members of the Configuration to the Japanese people and the Government through the Permanent Mission of Japan at the UN for the devastating impact of the recent earthquake and tsunami in Japan.

Briefing by the SRSG Ellen Margrethe Løj

The Chair first offered the floor to the SRSG, who raised three (3) critical issues relevant to the continued consolidation of peace in Liberia: elections, Ivorian refugees and UNMIL transition. While recognising to the challenges that arise in holding elections, the SRSG shared her positive assessment on the recent voter registration process. She expressed great concern about the growing influxes of Ivorian refugees, emphasizing the urgent need for the international community's support. In responding to a query on the presence of peacekeepers along the border, the SRSG elaborated on the challenges of monitoring a porous border that falls along a difficult terrain that limits land patrols. On UNMIL's transition planning, she put forth that security sector reform and rule of law are the two underlying prerequisites that require significant attention in order for the Liberian Government to reach the stage when it would be able to fulfill critical State responsibilities without the backing of UNMIL.

Update on the Work Plan

The Chairperson updated the Members on the status of work in the last few months at the country level. He reported that the Joint Steering Committee (JSC) endorsed the Priority Plan at the end of January. The JSC also adopted the revised terms of reference (ToR) for the reconfigured JSC, which is now more aligned with the membership of the Liberia Country Specific Configuration in New York. ToRs have also been approved for two (2) Technical Advisory Groups that have been formed to focus on national reconciliation and security and justice activities. The Chairperson further informed that a workshop had recently been held to develop the programmatic elements of the Priority Plan. A UN team had been deployed to Monrovia to assist with drafting the programme document, which was now with the Government for their consideration. The Chairperson commended the Government for their active participation in the workshop and informed that the steering group of the Configuration would

be meeting with the SRSRG and DSRSG of UNMIL to discuss how the PBC could contribute to the finalization of the peacebuilding programme.

Briefing on the PBC Chairperson's Missions to Washington, D.C., Brussels and Liberia

The Chairperson then provided an overview of the missions he undertook in the month of February as well as some consultations held in New York since the beginning of the year. Prior to his missions, the Chairperson met with the International Centre for Transitional Justice to gain insights on different approaches to Truth and Reconciliation Commissions (TRCs), prosecutions, reparations and memorials around the world. He also received a briefing on the West Africa Coast Initiative from DPKO, DPA and Interpol.

On 10 and 11 February, the Chairperson was in Washington, D.C., where he met with U.S. Government officials from the Department of Defense and Department of State, including USAID, as well as World Bank colleagues. In his discussions with Department of Defense he found convergence between the U.S. and Liberian Governments' views that the Armed Forces of Liberia would not be fully operational by mid-2012, which has hitherto been the target time line. In comparing notes on the overall situation in Liberia, U.S. Government officials expressed firm support for PBC's engagement in Liberia. The meetings with the World Bank were equally useful. Of particular interest was the Bank's assessment of their youth programme, which they will be sharing with the PBC for Members to further consider how best support to youth employment. Bank colleagues also informed that within the Ministry of Finance, there is some initial thinking on the possibility to establish a special court for financial crimes.

On route to Liberia, the Chairperson stopped over in Brussels on 17 February to meet with European Union officials, who shared a wealth of insights gleaned over the years on peace consolidation in Liberia. A key point of agreement was the idea of a specialized court for financial crimes. The Chairperson then continued on to Liberia from 18 – 22 February. He first focused on his trip to Nimba County, where in receiving briefings from UN colleagues and Liberian security officers, he learned first hand the urgent need to support the Liberian Government to effectively respond to the humanitarian needs arising from the Ivorian conflict as well as the security risks that are surfacing from the conflict unfolding in Côte d'Ivoire. Another key meeting in Nimba, that substantiated previous assessments on reconciliation, was an exchange with local leaders on land disputes. While not all, some of the land disputes are manifestations of tensions between different communities within the local population. Highlighting how many good ideas are emanating with Liberians, the Chairperson briefly summarized meetings in Monrovia with an array of Government officials and civil society groups. One recommendation that stands out as an effective way to assist national reconciliation is the establishment of a national historical commission. He asked for the Configuration's concurrence to discuss this issue further the Liberian Government. The Chairperson concluded with comments on the Hub project. He noted that Hub construction is beginning in Gbarnga, Bong County and he is hopeful that when the Configuration travels to Liberia later in the year, Members would see a significant amount of completed construction on the entire Hub concept.

Subsequently, four (4) Member States took the floor. Members emphasized the need for PBC needs to determine how it can support the Liberian Government to effectively respond to the humanitarian and security implications of the Ivorian conflict. They asked for greater details about the Hubs, as well as underlined the need for strengthening linkages between NY and the field.