

Peacebuilding Commission
Informal meeting of the Liberian Country Specific Configuration
25 May 2011

Chairperson's Summary of the Discussion

Background

On 25 May 2011, the Chairperson of the Country Configuration for Liberia, H.R.H. Prince Zeid Ra'ad Zeid Al Hussein, presided over the fifth informal meeting of the Configuration. The purpose of the meeting was to update Members of the Configuration on finalization of Liberia Peacebuilding Programme (LPP), brief on the upcoming PBC trip and to prepare for the review of the Statement of Mutual Commitments (SMC).

Finalization of Liberia Peacebuilding Programme

The Chairperson informed on the outcome of the meeting on 16 March 2011 between the Steering Group and the Special Representative of the Secretary-General (SRSG) and the Deputy SRSG. He indicated that the meeting produced an agreement that the PBC would review the LPP before it was adopted in Monrovia. The Liberia Configuration had been represented in the Joint Steering Committee Meeting on 5 May 2011 by the Steering Group, which supported the JSC's endorsement of the document. It was also agreed that the document would remain a flexible document that would be reviewed every nine months.

The Chairperson commented that the document had significantly improved from the first draft by narrowing its scope, which fits clearly within the ambit of the SMC. Out of the original five (5) main issues the PBC shared on the LPP, three (3) were outstanding: pilot youth employment project, land compensation scheme and the relationship between the JSC and the PBC. After some discussion it was agreed for the youth employment pilot to remain as part of the programme. On the land compensation scheme, the Chairperson reiterated the PBC's concerns over the feasibility of such a scheme that can create insatiable demands. With regards to the linkages between the PBC and the JSC, it was decided for the Chairperson to regularly participate in JSC meetings as means to build the linkages between the PBC and the JSC. In terms of next steps, the Chairperson emphasized the role of the PBC in resource mobilization that would need to be discussed following PBSO's review of the LPP for the determination of the PBF allocation.

The Chairperson further recapitulated the update that had been provided on the Regional Justice and Security Hub at the JSC meeting. Terms of reference were being finalized for a Justice and Security Programme Manager post. It was also recognized that greater focus was needed on the public outreach component of the project. UNOPS had briefed that the land had been cleared and that two buildings had been started and were expected to be completed in August with another six structures finished by end of October. The Chairperson mentioned that the PBC would need to work with the Government to help ensure that they would gradually be able to absorb the recurring costs of the Hub. The Chairperson closed this agenda item by inviting Steering Group members to join him in a Justice and Security Technical Advisory Group meeting to be held the 1 June.

Briefing on the PBC Delegation's Upcoming Mission to Liberia

The Chairperson opened this agenda item by noting that his expectation for all members to join him on this trip had been lowered to the participation of the Steering Group members only. He continued by asking how members of the Configuration can become sufficiently familiar and remain engaged with the situation in Liberia, in order to be able to advise the Chairperson and the Configuration on the various challenges facing consolidation of peace in Liberia, if they do not travel to the country. He further underscored that the added value of the PBC depends on being able to substantively engage with stakeholders in Liberia. Without the active engagement with the field, the PBC risks being assessed as irrelevant by the actors on the ground.

Subsequently, two (2) Members took the floor in support of the Chairperson's view. The Ambassador of Ireland, speaking as a member of the 2010 PBC Review, stressed that a key finding of the Review was the importance of strengthening the connection between the field and the PBC. She added that as a new Configuration, the Liberia Configuration had the opportunity to improve the situation by ensuring that the burden of PBC engagement is not solely carried out by the Chairperson. The Ambassador of the United States commended the Chairperson for his candor and successful efforts in organizing meetings that result in decisions.

The Chairperson concluded this agenda item by suggesting that the next PBC trip after the July visit will be in the beginning of 2012 following the elections and inauguration of the new government encouraging members to consider making arrangements to participate in this trip.

Preparations for the Review of the Statement of Mutual Commitments (SMC)

The Chairperson indicated that the matrix of activities that had been shared electronically with all members, encouraging members to share any comments by the 30th May. He also outlined the Configuration's work plan till the end July.

Any other Business

The Representative from the European Union (EU) informed that the International Contact Group had been revived in Liberia with a focus on the upcoming elections. He further commented that the EU had received an official request for an electoral mission that was being seriously considered.

20 July 2011