

Peacebuilding Commission
Informal meeting of the Liberian Country Specific Configuration
4 December 2013 (10:00 a.m., ECOSOC Chamber)

Chair's Summary of the Discussion

Background

The Liberia Configuration of the Peacebuilding Commission convened an informal meeting on Wednesday, 4 December 2013 at the United Nations Headquarters. The meeting was chaired by the H.E. Mr. Staffan Tillander, Chair of the Configuration, and focused on current issues related to justice and security, and national reconciliation. A briefing on the implementation of the Statement of Mutual Commitments was also provided by a representative of the Liberia Peacebuilding Office of the Ministry of Internal Affairs. The Chair extended his warm welcome to the new Director and Deputy Head of the Peacebuilding Support Office, Mr. Kenneth Gluck, who took part in his first meeting of the Liberian Country Specific Configuration.

Statement of Mutual Commitments

1. The representative of the Liberia Peacebuilding Office of the Ministry of Internal Affairs informed that the draft mid-term review of the Statement of Mutual Commitments (SMC) had been shared by PBSO with the configuration members requesting for their inputs by 17 January 2014, for the preparation of the annual report. With regard to the Commitments by the Government of Liberia from 12 October 2012 to 13 November 2013, 19 out of 23 targets had been met under “Strengthening the Rule of Law”; 22 out of 31 targets had been met under “Supporting Security Sector Reform”; and 12 out of 17 targets had been met under “Promoting National Reconciliation”. [The figures are subject to change after receiving inputs on 17 January.] The Chair noted that the SMC was a basis for dialogue with partners in New York and in Liberia.

Justice and Security

2. The DSRSG for Rule of Law at UNMIL briefed the Configuration (by VTC) on the Security Sector Retreat held in September 2013 in Liberia. The retreat had served as an opportunity for senior government officials and international partners to discuss a number of challenges faced by the security sector and surrounding issues. The outcome would be a useful basis for inputs to the national security strategy in the coming months.
3. The participants at the retreat had agreed on the following:
 - 1). There was a universal recognition that in the transition phase of UNMIL, the Government of Liberia would need to take accelerated steps to ensure that the security sector would be able to take full responsibility for the security in Liberia without the support of UNMIL.

- 2). Security sector reform should be the Government's priority for resource allocation. Although effective financial support to the security sector had been provided through external sources, the Government's financial resources for the sector was limited. Therefore, expectations should take into account the realities.
- 3). The development of the security sector was not only a matter of financial and personnel resources. There should be focus on institutional and managerial capacity, oversight and accountability.
4. The DSRSG also shared that a nationwide baseline capacity assessment of the Liberia National Police (LNP) had been conducted by UNPOL/UNMIL and the LNP between March and September 2013 as the five-year security strategy was concluding at the end of 2013. Results had indicated that there was a need for greater focus on police reform and strengthening capacity of institutions and personnel of the LNP. The baseline would also serve as a guide for the future support of UNPOL to the LNP.
5. On the training of the Bureau of Immigration and Naturalization (BIN) officers, the DSRSG pointed out that in 2013, a total of 234 officers had been trained and deployed to a number of posts across country. Training for additional 750 BIN recruits would be conducted in phases pending availability of absorption capacity at the National Police Training Academy in Monrovia. Given the limitations in facilities of the National Police Academy, the transformation of the UNMIL Foya Base into a BIN training academy was key to the drawdown of UNMIL. This required donor support. DPKO and UNDP, together with PBSO, had been meeting with bilateral partners in New York to engage them in the work of the UN Global Focal Point (GFP) for Police, Justice and Corrections and to solicit support for the BIN training academy; the project proposal would be shared with the configuration soon. At UNHQ, DPKO/Police Division and UNDP, acting under the GFP arrangement for Police, Justice and Corrections, continued to support the development of the Country Support Plan for Liberia, which aimed to address, inter alia, capacity gaps of the LNP and the BIN in the areas of middle management capacity, financial and human resources management, project development and management, in-service training and personnel welfare structures, as well as resource mobilization for projects in such areas. There was appreciation by stakeholders for the Global Focal Point's country-level operation and the cooperation between UNDP and DPKO which was important for the United Nations' 'Delivery as One'.
6. The DSRSG also referred to the Criminal Justice Conference held in March 2013 which was followed by the management and accountability review by the Government of Liberia, the International Security Sector Advisory Team and the United Nations focusing on the Judiciary, Police and Prosecution. He expressed his appreciation for the support by the Peacebuilding Fund (PBF) for the review. On 24 October, the Ministry of Justice and Judiciary had conducted a workshop to validate the outcomes of the conference and the review. The Ministry and the Chief Justice had underlined that the discussions were important to achieve long-term effects in a holistic manner. The report of the workshop concluded that the judiciary, national police and prosecution needed policy direction and had weaknesses in linkages to strategies, budgets, capacity and prioritizing targets of existing resources. It was also recommended that the Legislature should be the lead state oversight institution. The need for understanding and access to public complaint mechanisms had also been underlined. The DSRSG also pointed out

that discussions on institutional reform should be properly addressed, such as under the new Police Act which was currently being drafted. Resolutions of the police conference had been accepted, and follow up would be done. Focal points had been identified, which was an important development.

7. A mid-term evaluation of the Justice and Security and Joint Programme was conducted by an external consultant. The Justice and Security Board discussed and consulted proposals with bilateral partners and other supporters of the programme. Recommendations of the evaluation included the need for prioritization of activities; the restructuring of the joint programmes; and the need for proposals for programme prioritization exercise.
8. On the Gbarnga Regional Justice and Security Hub, the DSRSG shared that 15 services had been provided including probation services, legal and advisory services, public defender services, public information, and others. The Human Rights Legal Resources Centre had also been opened within the Hub by UNMIL with financial support from OHCHR. Twelve out of thirteen buildings had been completed including the Court House, and the last facility was expected to be completed by 13 December 2013. The Ministry of Justice had informed that the opening of the Court House together with a lessons-learned workshop on services would take place in February 2014. On Hubs 2 and 3, funding had been received for services under phase one, which included justice and security personnel, public outreach, human rights monitoring, mobilization of justice centre services, consultations with traditional leaders, justice centres, and others. The next phase would move forward in the coming weeks.
9. The Constitutional Review Commission had initiated its work, and had consulted with the general public on the current constitution. Civic education in the counties was expected to start soon. The DSRSG underlined that there were challenges such as resources and capacity issues as well as lack of political consensus on the constitutional review process. UNMIL facilitated discussions to ensure that all key stakeholders understood the review process in order to achieve broader consensus.
10. A delegation commended the progress in first Hub and underlined the importance of delivery of services. The delegation also praised the country-level operations explained at the configuration meeting and also the strengthening of the United Nations' 'Delivery as One' on the ground. The delegation also expressed his wish to seek further details on the BIN Training Academy in Foya. It was also stressed that justice and security should be given priority by the Government of Liberia, and that the allocation of resources was an important indicator in this regard. The delegation also raised a question on how to sustain the national police force and ensure the presence of a professional police force after the drawdown of UNMIL.
11. The DSRSG responded that the issue of the sustainability of the national police force was a focus of UNMIL's attention. National counterparts were aware of the gaps in institutions, as well as the need for public confidence and sustainable institutions in the security sector. They were also aware that the BIN and the LNP had to be brought up to speed. The difficulties needed to be put in a broader context. The DSRSG pointed out, however, that in spite of the challenges, these institutions had come a long way over the past ten years. The institutions were able to carry out their responsibilities and had

improved considerably. Difficulties remained in resource and logistical capacity, and they were dependent on the services of UNMIL. He hoped that the institutions would become less dependent in the coming years, and noted that this was a long-term issue. The support provided to the institutions would be more focused on training, mentoring and developing capacities to develop their professional skills beyond the material needs.

12. A delegation expressed interest in the land issues and the vetting for land policy which were addressed under the Liberia Government's commitments in the SMC. The representative of UN-Habitat in Liberia underlined that the Land Rights Policy was key to the National Reconciliation Roadmap. In addition, security of land tenure was crucial for the country's development, in particular for community land. Concessions provided to companies were not made clear, but a policy was currently being drafted which was expected to be presented to Parliament by 2014. On land disputes, it was noted that the PBF had supported the establishment of land coordination centres as part of alternate dispute mechanisms.
13. On land and national resources, a representative of UNDP briefed the Configuration on the recent joint UNDP and World Bank mission to Liberia on extractive industries focusing on oil, gas and minerals. The mission had observed that there was a need for institution capacity and civil society capacity in the extractive sector. He noted that although UNDP had been supporting the Government of Liberia in negotiations of petroleum contracts, the Government underlined the need for more sustained support on contract negotiations across the extractive sector. UNDP planned at the request of the Government, to support the work of the Environment Protection Agency and the National Bureau of Concessions (NBC) as well as to support local SMEs to benefit from the extractive sector. UNDP also pointed out to the need to increase community participation across the extractive sector including contracts and land concessions. The representative stated that the Government had started to address legal and regulatory weakness in the sector by revisiting petroleum and mining with an aim to introduce robust legal and regulatory framework to govern the sector. It had also been observed that as the natural resources sector involved significant economic activity, accounting for 147% of the country's GDP and 1.6% of the labour force, conflict issues needed to be properly managed. The mission concluded that 1) UNMIL and local authorities agreed that the extractive industries was important factor for long-term peace and security especially in the context of the UNMIL drawdown; 2) Natural resources provided a platform for achieving the 2030 Vision of the Liberian Government to reach middle income status; and 3) the joint mission between UNDP and the World Bank was part of a broader commitment between the Secretary-General and the President of the World Bank to strengthen collaboration between the UN and the World Bank.
14. A delegation expressed interest in the allotment of the \$15 million from the PBF to be used for national reconciliation as well as the Palava Hut and how it would be coordinated. The delegation also inquired about the role of the Peacebuilding Commission (PBC) in this regard, and noted the importance of discussions on sharing experiences with the help of PBSO or the OCPBC.
15. The DSRS of UNMIL responded that the PBC played an important role in mobilizing international support and resources for Liberia. One challenge faced by UNMIL was augmenting its capacity, for example, in UNPOL. Identifying experts to enhance capacity

would be useful. The DSRSG also pointed out to the danger of considering Liberia had overcome all its difficulties. He stressed that Liberia still needed support for the challenges arriving from conflict and existing new challenges. The role of the PBC in facilitating the international process was vital.

16. The representative of PBSO referred to his experience in Liberia during 1996-1997 and commended Liberia and UNMIL for having come a long way. He congratulated the Government of Liberia and UNMIL for their achievements. Not only were the initiatives aligned with the Secretary-General's goals on peacebuilding, but the Government's footprints had expanded by bringing questions on justice, governance, rule of law and inclusiveness to areas that had been cut off by the Government. Although progress had been slow, it had been a remarkable one. The handover of functions to the Government as UNMIL draws down was also a sign of success. The representative asked for the Configuration's continued support to the Chair and PBSO in this regard. A delegation agreed that there had been tremendous progress, stating that "There was still a journey, but we should not despair".
17. A delegation inquired to what extent UNMIL was using facilities for civilian capacity. The DSRSG of UNMIL responded that there were ongoing discussions with UN Headquarters on various fronts regarding this matter. UNMIL, for example, utilized resources for building police capacity and also built partnership to address correction issues. He underlined that it had not always been easy to find specialized expertise, in particular in areas such as human resource management, budget and finance. Some success had been registered, but discussions were ongoing. The Global Focal Point was also assisting in this regard.
18. The representative of the United Nations Mine Action Service (UNMAS) gave a presentation on UNMAS' work in Liberia since July 2013 to support the Armed Forces of Liberia (AFL) and the LNP and to build national capacity to respond to explosive remnants of war. [The presentation was later shared with the configuration.] He underlined that the financial support from UNMIL for the UNMAS project in Liberia would end on 30 June 2014. Therefore, funding was urgently needed to continue the project. It was estimated that approximately \$2 million would be required from July 2014 to June 2015.

National Reconciliation

19. The representative of the Peacebuilding Office of the Ministry of Internal Affairs in Liberia shared that seven projects had been funded under the \$15 million provided to Liberia through the PBF. Some of the projects, including the Land Alternative Dispute Resolution Project, the National Youth Service Project and the Palava Hut Programme, had already begun implementation, while the procurement process had been initiated for other projects. The representative added that the projects were part of the 12 thematic areas under the National Reconciliation Roadmap. The land reform project and natural resources management project were also expected to be funded soon. The World Bank and UNDP, with the support by PBSO, had conducted a survey on conflict issues in natural resources management, in particular on concessions. The report would be presented in early 2014. He also shared that a three-day Palava Hut Forum had recently been held to discuss issues related to the structure of the Palava Hut talks, mechanisms,

and the types of issues should be addressed in the talks. The representative of the HRPS/OHCHR section in UNMIL added that a technical forum on the Palava Hut had been conducted, the findings of which had indicated that issues related to conflict and human rights needed to be addressed; transitional justice tools needed clarity; a study to synergize different mechanisms to use the Hut more effectively was needed; the scope and methodologies of the Hut needed to be defined taking into account women's participation; and training and capacity building were key issues.

20. On the coordination issue, the Peacebuilding Office Representative underlined that much had been done, but the layers of structure needed to be streamlined. He noted that there was a pillar working group on peace, justice and security discussing how to align coordination mechanisms to the Agenda for Transformation. The revision of membership of all the structures was also being considered.
21. On south-south cooperation, the Peacebuilding Office representative shared that the Government and the United Nations were looking at how to expand the lessons-learned beyond Rwanda and Mozambique to include countries such as Nigeria, Kenya, Sierra Leone and South Africa. He underlined, however, that it was important not to lose sight of the original intent, and also that the capacity of local authorities needed to be strengthened in order to proceed on the right track. He also emphasized that the Government was keen on moving ahead with national reconciliation. Efforts needed to be broadened, and root causes needed to be addressed; he referred to such issues as decentralization, land issues, youth employment, women employment, legal reforms to cite a few examples. The representative of UNICEF in Liberia briefed on the PBF-funded project - the National Youth Service Programme - which included 175 national volunteers in 12 counties. The programme was conducted in partnership with USAID, Peace Corp and the Ministry of Youth. He also underlined that increasing the number of women volunteers was a challenge. They accounted for 37 per cent of programme participants. Finding permanent employment for programme participants was also a challenge.
22. The Officer-in-Charge of the office of the DSRSG for Consolidation of Democratic Governance at UNMIL suggested that lessons on building national symbols could be learned from South Africa, and similarly on social cohesion from Kenya and integrated approaches to reconciliation from Nigeria. He also referred to ongoing efforts by the government in terms of supporting the National Elections Commission by enhancing political capacity, gender capacity and decentralization to strengthen local authorities. UNDP and USAID were partners in these endeavours. The Representative of UNDP in Liberia further referred to the support to the NEC for training on legal research, conflict preparation, electoral management and the funding for the Palava Hut through UNDP/BCPR to sustain efforts. In relation to the Gbarnga Hub, the UNDP representative also informed the configuration that UNDP had given the Independent National Commission on Human Rights monitors in the Hub financial support for a period of six months since the Government was not able to do so after the support from PBF had ended.
23. A delegation underlined the importance of national reconciliation and welcomed the launch of the Palava Hut process. The delegation expressed interest in the views of local

authorities on the Constitutional Review process and welcomed efforts in the fight against corruption and in the natural resources sector.

24. The EU would provide under its development budget, 279 million Euros for the next seven years, including areas such as education and energy.
25. A delegation welcomed the ongoing diverse discussions on national reconciliation including the efforts to prioritize activities and mechanisms. On south-south cooperation, the delegation underlined the need to draw good lessons from countries while taking into account each country's specific background.

Announcements

26. It was announced that on 11 December 2013, a Peacebuilding Commission Working Group on Lessons Learned (“Enhancing gender-responsive national reconciliation processes”) would take place. The working group would discuss lessons from Yemen, Sierra Leone, Liberia and Kyrgyzstan.
27. The Chair announced that the Liberian Minister of Internal Affairs would visit New York during the week of 16 December 2013. The Chair would invite the configuration to a breakfast meeting with the Minister on 17 December for an informal discussion about the reconciliation process.
28. The representative of the Peacebuilding Office informed that the configuration that an updated version of the concept note on south-south cooperation, which would include the additional countries mentioned at the configuration meeting, was to be shared soon.
