

Peacebuilding Commission
Informal meeting of the Liberian Country Specific Configuration
9 July 2014 (10:00 a.m., Conference Room 4, NLB)

Chair's Summary

1. The Liberia Configuration of the Peacebuilding Commission (PBC) convened an informal meeting on Wednesday, 9 July 2014 at the United Nations Headquarters. H.E. Mr. Mårten Grunditz, Chair of the Configuration, briefed the Configuration on his first visit to Monrovia, Liberia, that took place from 30 June to 3 July. The report of his visit had been circulated to the configuration members prior to the meeting. Assistant Secretary-General Judy Cheng-Hopkins of the UN Peacebuilding Support Office (PBSO) took part in the meeting.
2. The Chair opened the meeting by expressing his deep appreciation to UNMIL for all the support for his visit and also thanked members of the Government of Liberia for their warm welcome during his visit. The Chair noted that he had met with main stakeholders of the Government of Liberia, including the President, as well as representatives of civil society and the United Nations in Liberia. He expressed his wish to visit areas outside of Monrovia the next time he traveled to Liberia. The Chair also shared that former Chair of the Liberia Configuration, H.E. Mr. Staffan Tillander, would return to the Foreign Service of Sweden as of 1 September, and that Mr. Carl Skau (Counsellor) of the Government of Sweden would join the Permanent Mission of Sweden to the United Nations to assist the Chair in carrying out his role.
3. The Chair underlined the three challenges for Liberia that had been indicated in his report (para. 6):
 - 1) The expansion, training and accountability mechanisms of the national police, border services and immigration service and, most critically, the provision to these services of the necessary enablers and appropriate maintenance;
 - 2) The need for the Government to ensure the allocation of and release of sufficient budgetary resources for justice, security and reconciliation purposes including the regional justice and security hubs and the reconciliation roadmap;
 - 3) Encouraging increased inclusivity of civil society, including women's groups, in important national processes such as national reconciliation, land reform, natural resources policy and in the coming development of a New Deal Compact to which the Government has committed itself.
4. On the first challenge, the Chair called on development partners to consider the possibilities for supporting the efforts of the Government of Liberia in regard to building the Liberian national police (LNP) and the border and immigration service (BIN). On the LNP, the Government had earlier pegged its manpower requirements at 8,000 LNP officers, while later examination had indicated that already a force of 7,000 would achieve the same ratio of police to population as in Côte d'Ivoire and Sierra Leone. The Government had informed the Chair that it was now assessing the manpower and training requirements in view of available financial space and training facilities. The Chair further cited that the Liberia National Police Training Academy (NPTA), according to

information he had received, had the capacity of training 600 officers per year. The Government had received indications of possibilities to use training facilities in neighbouring countries. Overall, estimates projecting that approximately 5,500 officers could be trained by the end of FY 2015 still seemed rather realistic. That would be a somewhat smaller police service than the proportion of the population compared to countries such as Côte d'Ivoire or Sierra Leone and with possibilities to reach 7,000 within another two years. There were now 1,800 border and immigration services officers, of which several hundred would have to be deactivated, while a total of 3,000 have been assessed as necessary. A total of 234 officers had been trained in 2013.

5. While there was some progress in regard to the training and the management of the LNP and BIN, the Chair had been informed that the operational ability of these services to a large extent would be dependent on the provision of a commensurate volume of modern mobility, communications and other enablers, and that the funding for such enablers currently was far from assured. The Chair shared the assessment of UNMIL that donor partners should be encouraged to facilitate support in the area of enablers and their maintenance. Such support must now, in view of UNMIL's continued drawdown, be considered time critical.
6. On other budget and resource matters, the Chair highlighted that he had repeated to government officials during his visit that the Government needed to release the \$1 million committed for the start-up of the third regional justice and security hub, and also to include in the budget costs the operation of the hubs as recurrent expenditure rather than project expenditure. He had also recommended government officials to consider securing financial resources for land management in the recurrent costs of the national budget. The Chair added that in the land reform area, there was now significant progress in terms of the institutional and legislative framework and that ensuing management costs was coming to the fore. He also asked PBSO to consider further extension of support to the land reform area.
7. The Chair highlighted the issue of the fiscal space of the Liberian Government which had been raised by the President. The Chair shared that the President had indicated that there were budget requests totalling approximately \$2 billion, while revenues would only permit expenditures of about one quarter of that amount. There was thus a clear need not only to make priorities but also to widen the revenue base, not least the tax base and to improve tax administration. The President had welcomed donors' support in these capacity areas.
8. The Chair also emphasized that he had conveyed to government officials the need for their leadership and coordination in regard to natural resources policy as well as the need for financing of natural resource management capacity.
9. On the New Deal Compact, there was now a clear commitment by the Government of Liberia to reach a Compact. Indications were that consultations on the Compact would be conducted during July and August, and it was important that these consultations be conducted inclusively. The Chair recalled the aim to include the peacebuilding goals of the Statement of Mutual Commitments in a future Compact.

10. A delegation of the Configuration expressed appreciation for the chair's report and noted the shortage of budget resources in Liberia, even in areas which were not under the Government's commitments being undertaken. This was an issue the Government of Liberia needed to address. As pressure to accelerate the drawdown of UNMIL continued, the forthcoming session of the Security Council in September would be important. The regional hubs aimed towards easing the transition in the security sector as UNMIL drew down, but the constraints in the implementation of the hubs could create difficulties.
11. On the regional justice and security hubs, the ASG of PBSO said that this project was an innovative proposal presented by the Government of Liberia with an aim to increase the presence of justice and security sectors outside of Monrovia. The project was part of the Government's broader decentralization plan. However, in order to achieve the vision of establishing five hubs, funding was needed. The ASG noted that this issue had been brought to the attention of the Minister of Finance, and the President had also expressed her commitment to the hubs. The Chair highlighted that he had concurred with conclusion of the co-chairs of the Justice and Security Joint Programme on the need to assess operations in hubs 2 and 3 before planning for hubs 4 and 5 proceeded, to which the government had also agreed. At the request by the Chair, Mr. Bautista Logioco of the Financing for Peacebuilding Branch, PBSO, shared some of his findings of his recent mission to Liberia related to the operation of the hubs including the issue of budget support and public perception of the hubs.
12. The Chair concluded the meeting by thanking the members of the configuration for participating in the meeting.
