

17 May 2016

To : Members of the PBC –Liberia Configuration

Ambassadorial-level meeting of the Peacebuilding Commission

Liberia Configuration, 2 May 2016

Chair's Summary

Background

On 2 May 2016, the Peacebuilding Commission (PBC) Liberia Configuration held an informal Ambassadorial-level meeting under the chairmanship of Mr. H.E. Mr. Olof Skoog to launch the revised Statement of Mutual Commitment (SMC) and to discuss the UNDP/UNMIL Joint Programme “Strengthening the Rule of Law in Liberia: Justice and Security for the Liberia People 2016-2019 and World Bank study, “Toward Shared Prosperity: Citizen Engagement in Liberia’s Natural Resource Concessions”.

Senior officials, including the Foreign Minister H.E. Ambassador Marjon Kamara, Acting Minister of Justice Cllr. Wheatonia Dixon-Barnes, Deputy Minister of Interior Mr. Varney Sirleaf, the Liberia Peace Ambassador Ambassador William R. Tolbert, III, Independent National Commission on Human Rights, SRSG for Liberia and Head of UNMIL Mr. Farid Zarif, DSRSG (Political and Rule of Law) UNMIL Mr. Waldemar Vrey, Mr. Stanley Kamara from UNDP, Ms. Sigrid Gruener from the Dag Hammarskjöld Foundation and Ms. Deborah Isser from the World Bank, resident PBC members and donors in Monrovia attended the meeting. The Assistant Secretary-General for Peacebuilding Support, Mr. Oscar Fernandez-Taranco, also shared insights on the peacebuilding dimension.

Introductory Remarks/briefing by the Chair

1. In his introductory remarks, the Chair congratulated the finalization of the revised SMC, which has a clear vision for the work to be undertaken in partnership, by the Liberian government and the Commission, over the next few years. The SMC reaffirms the commitment of the PBC and the Government of Liberia to continue cooperation in areas identified as priority for peace and stability. The Chair committed to mobilizing attention

around the critical areas mentioned in the SMC for further consolidation of peace in Liberia.

Other Speakers

2. Cllr. Dixon-Barnes, Mr. Sirleaf, SRSG Zarif, DSRSG Vrey, Mr. Kamara, Ms. Gruener, some resident PBC members and donors in Monrovia welcomed the revised SMC. Cllr. Dixon-Barnes and Mr. Sirleaf thanked the PBC for its continued support and expressed their commitment to the implementation of the SMC in a concrete and targeted manner. Some stated that it was important to ensure that the agreed Commitments were followed through and that immediate work should start on developing implementation plans, with clear timelines and deliverables. UNMIL SRSG hoped that the renewed and reenergised engagement between the Commission and the Government would lead to more structured, coordinated and long-term national focus and international support to achieve the agreed priorities, especially at a time when UNMIL was preparing to drawdown by 30 June.
3. UNMIL DSRSG (Political and Rule of Law) briefed on the new joint UNDP/UNMIL programme on Rule of Law, which was under the umbrella of the SMC. The programme, working closely with all relevant stakeholders and the international community, was geared towards further strengthening the different Liberian justice and security institutions, as well as continuing to build capacities at the grassroots level to ensure access to justice for local communities, with particular attention to the needs of women and children.
4. The World Bank representative presented the joint (World Bank, UNDP, Peacebuilding Office, Ministry of Internal Affairs and Land Commission) study on natural resource concession. The study aimed to identify concrete steps that could be taken to help shift Liberia's natural resource economy from sites of contest and conflict to opportunities for shared growth and prosperity; to better understand the nature and source of disputes in concession areas; to identify the nature and quality of the institutional arrangements established to allocate costs and benefits and manage conflicts; and to identify and build on positive innovations and capabilities that may be emerging. UNDP stated that they would need to find ways to integrate the findings of the study into the work to implement the commitments contained in the SMC. He hoped that additional resources, particularly from the PBF, would be made available to develop a joint proposal and continue the dialogue through a high-level roundtable.
5. The DHF representative provided an update on the seminar held in Monrovia in March, entitled "Integration and Fragmentation in Transitions from Conflict". The seminar addressed the practical challenges of ensuring a cohesive, consistent and integrated compact-like engagement between the international community and host nation that supported inclusive national and local ownership. She emphasized the important role the PBC would play in accompanying Liberia's transition in the coming months and

encouraged the PBC to use the new resolutions as a tool to make Liberia a success story for peacebuilding.

6. Member States took the floor to make comments and ask questions. Participants welcomed the recently adopted General Assembly (A/RES/70/262) and Security Council (S/RES/2282(2016)) resolutions on the Review of the Peacebuilding Architecture, which were being implemented in the case of Liberia. The resolutions emphasize sustainable peace, conflict prevention, the issues of fragmentation in the UN, strengthening the role of the PBC, among others. The meeting stressed the importance of an integrated and holistic approach to sustaining peace, building coherence and promoting coordination with all stakeholders, providing sustainable financing, adapting to local contexts and underscoring the importance of national ownership. The Chair stated that this would give further impetus to the work of the PBC. A Member State emphasized the importance of the joint UNDP/UNMIL programme in particular and called on the “PBC to do a little more”.

Conclusion

7. Mr. Fernandez-Taranco congratulated the PBC on taking the first concrete step in implementing the new resolution. He underscored the importance of political commitment of the government to complete the transition and the importance of maintaining coherence between the UN, national actors and the international community. From the UN side, he informed that the UN System Chief Executive Board for Coordination (CEB) recently met on 27 April to discuss the cross-pillar integration and transition successes and challenges in Liberia and realize the potential of UN system integration to facilitate optimal outcomes. He also stressed that the SMC required the political will to complete the transitional reforms. National ownership and the role of the Government and national stakeholders were critical. He referred to the legislations and policy reforms that needed to be passed and implemented, such as the Land Rights Act, the Land Authority Act, the Local Governance Act, the Gender Equity Bill, the Whistle Blowers Protection Act and the Corrupt Offences Act. He emphasized the importance of the government budget system to prioritize national needs and commitments. The PBF had contributed \$50 million since 2008 to Liberia to address drivers of conflict and had been useful in bringing the UN together. The SMC would be used to prioritize the next \$10 million.
