

28 June 2017

To : Members of the PBC Liberia Configuration

**Ambassadorial-level meeting of the Peacebuilding Commission**

**Liberia Configuration, 16 June 2017**

**Chair's Summary**

**Background**

On 16 June 2017, the Peacebuilding Commission (PBC) Liberia Configuration held an Ambassadorial-level meeting under the chairmanship of H.E. Ms. Irina Schoulgin Nyoni of Sweden to discuss the Chair's visit to Monrovia, Liberia; the transition in Liberia and the results of the United Nations Country Team (UNCT) mapping exercise.

Senior officials attended, including the DSRSG (Peace Consolidation) and RC, Mr. Yacoub El Hillo, Permanent Representative of Liberia to the UN, H.E. Lewis Brown, Mr. Björn Gillsäter of The World Bank, resident PBC members, and Director, PBSO, Ms. Mari Yamashita.

**Introductory Remarks/briefing by the Chair**

1. In her introductory remarks, the Chair welcomed the DSRSG and RC Yacoub El Hillo to the meeting during his visit to New York. She sent the apologies of Ambassador Olof Skoog, who was delayed in returning from his visit to Liberia.

**On the Chair's visit to Monrovia, Liberia**

2. The Chair briefed on Ambassador Skoog's visit to Liberia, the objective of which was to follow up on progress made on the implementation of the peacebuilding plan; discuss preparations for the upcoming elections; consult with stakeholders on key reforms related to land rights and decentralization; and identify ways in which the PBC could support. The Chair met with the President, a number of government ministers, civil society, youth representatives, political parties, the National Election Commission (NEC), the Chief Justice, donors and representatives of the international

community. The timing of the visit was intended to provide input from the PBC to the Security Council who would discuss the situation in Liberia on 27 June. During his visit, Ambassador Skoog highlighted the importance of a number of key structural reforms as set out in phase I of the peacebuilding plan, including the passing of important bills including the Land Rights Act and the Local Government Act. These reforms would help address root causes of conflict in Liberia. The Ambassador also urged all to contribute to a free and fair election, encouraging the strong participation of women and involvement of youth. The passing of the Domestic Violence bill was also discussed, as well as the need to increase women's participation in the elections.

3. The Chair stressed that the visit and consultations confirmed that Liberia was at a critical juncture, with several historic transitions underway, and dedicated attention required in the months ahead. She noted that while no interlocutor saw a clear risk of relapse into conflict, there were nonetheless hurdles ahead, and the role of the PBC would be increasingly important. The Chair made a number of substantive observations. First, regarding the transition, while the government had successfully resumed responsibility of security, work remained to enhance the capacity of security sector actors. Regarding the upcoming elections, the NEC was undertaking a voter registration exhibition during the visit. Political parties recently signed The Farmington River Declaration, in the margins of the ECOWAS summit in Monrovia, in which they committed to peaceful elections. Remaining challenges included a funding gap for the activities of the NEC, issues surrounding the Code of Conduct, the continued need for civic education, women's participation and security concerns. The Chair encouraged offers from international partners of election observers which would be welcomed by the Government of Liberia. Regarding the Peacebuilding Plan, broad and inclusive ownership of the plan was demonstrated during the visit and a cost exercise for implementation of phase 1 has been completed by the government. Finally, regarding UNMIL drawdown and the transition of UN presence, the mapping of the UNCT was identified as having been a useful exercise for the UN system in Liberia to think strategically about how to increase capacity in the country team as UNMIL leaves, in order to enable it to assume residual tasks. It was concluded that the UN would face a "cliff" in terms of resources, capacities and expertise when the mandate of UNMIL ended. The Chair concluded that the situation in Liberia constituted a test case for the UN system in applying the sustaining peace approach. There was a collective responsibility to ensure the safeguarding of the investment made over the past 13 years, to consolidate peace in Liberia.

#### **On transition in Liberia and the results of the UNCT mapping of capacities**

4. DSRSG (Peace Consolidation) and RC, Mr. Yacoub El Hillo noted that the Chair's observations were a good summary of the key issues accompanying Liberia. A peaceful transfer of power was anticipated following elections on October 10. The DSRSG emphasised that Liberia was experiencing multiple transitions and that significant gains had been made. The country nonetheless continued to face

numerous challenges: Ebola dealt a blow to the country; the economy was struggling; and work to strengthen national capacities was ongoing. The DSRSG noted that while UNMIL was a success story for peacekeeping, it should also be made one in terms of peacebuilding.

5. The DSRSG introduced the mapping of the UNCT technical and operational capacities to support the UN commitments in the Liberian Peacebuilding Plan (shared with the meeting in advance via email and in a summary document in the meeting), noting that the objective was to identify whether the UNCT collectively had the necessary capacity, resources and expertise to support peacebuilding in Liberia. The DSRSG stressed that the answer is clearly that it did not, and there was a need for this to be addressed. The peacebuilding plan and its identified priorities would be difficult to implement if affirmative actions were not taken to provide the UNCT with additional financial and operational resources to continue supporting the country after UNMIL's departure in March 2018. There was a need to examine the business model of the UN in Liberia. The mapping indicated a massive cliff drop in predictability of resources as there would be a move from predictable funding streams to predominantly project-based funding of the UN Agencies, Funds and Programmes (AFPs). Political commitment was required to ensure that Liberia would continue to receive the needed attention and support from the international community.
6. The DSRSG asked Ms. Jane O. Yeboah, UNDP and head of the UN HQ mission Team working on the mapping exercise, to brief the meeting further on the findings. Ms. Jane O. Yeboah, UNDP stressed that the root causes of conflict in Liberia had not been sufficiently addressed and that continued support from the international community, and the UN system in particular, was imperative to sustain peace in Liberia. Ms. Yeboah highlighted the significant decline of technical capacity in the areas of peace, security and rule of law that would follow the departure of UNMIL, as well as the anticipated absence of logistics and infrastructure. The UNCT would need to rely on their own political economy analysis, for which there was currently no dedicated technical capacity, and ensure direct relationship management with national counterparts and other partners. There were potential gains from moving into one UN house and scaling up the logistical capacity of WFP. However, an estimated \$65million per year was required for the first two years (\$130 million total over the two years) after UNMIL's closure to support the Government in consolidating peace dividends. The mapping also endorsed the creation of a fully-fledged OHCHR country presence in Liberia, which would require further financial support.
7. Ms. Mari Yamashita of PBSO reflected on the importance of Liberia as a test case for sustaining peace. The resolutions adopted on the Review of the peacebuilding architecture (A/RES/70/262 and S/RES/2282 (2016)) on sustaining peace emphasised: continuity of relevant peacebuilding programmes (paragraph 30(c)); adequate resourcing of peacebuilding activities of UN country teams, and the peacebuilding components of UN peacekeeping operations and special political

missions, including during mission transitions and drawdown (paragraph 30(f)); and strengthening the capacity of the senior leadership of the UNCT to absorb relevant peacebuilding functions following the drawdown of Security Council mandated missions (paragraph 30(g)).

8. Member States welcomed the important discussion on Liberia’s transition and the capacity of the United Nations to support sustaining peace in the country. Liberia was noted as an important test case for the work of the PBC in support of peacebuilding and sustaining peace and should be a model for other countries undergoing similar transitions. A number of Member States noted concern that the root causes of conflict had not been addressed and stated that the United Nations should be on notice. Some Member States noted concern about the financial “cliff” faced by the UNCT and suggested ways in which a smoother transition could be supported, including drawing on experience from good examples such as Sierra Leone; a donor pledging conference for Liberia to garner both political and financial support; and establishment of a peacebuilding office or unit in Liberia. A number of Member States raised the importance of the youth, peace and security agenda and the opportunities for mobilizing youth in Liberia for peace. PBSO was asked whether there are lessons learned from the work supported by the PBF to date. The importance of a common vision for Liberia was noted, and the role of other partners on the ground complementing the work of the UN in sustaining peace. Some Member States noted the need to prioritise goals to ensure they were realistic and inclusive. It was noted that the PBC should continue to monitor the implementation of the peacebuilding plan and that briefings on its progress would be welcomed.
  
9. The DSRSG expressed support for a number of the ideas raised, stressing the need for a conference for an “international Liberia moment” to focus attention and support for the new government in early 2018. He expressed the hope that PBF and PBC support to Liberia would be catalytic. The PBF had recently pledged an additional \$10 million of transition support to areas including youth, land, reconciliation, security and the rule of law, and continuation of human rights activities. The DSRSG suggested the establishment of a trust fund dedicated to Liberia. He reaffirmed the importance of focusing on youth. The DSRSG reemphasised the challenges that would be faced by the UNCT, including a lack of field presence (with only the World Health Organization present in all 15 counties), access and logistics, and agreed with the need for the UN to prioritise what it was in fact capable of supporting.
  
10. Ms. Mari Yamashita of PBSO informed the meeting of an ongoing evaluation of PBF support to Liberia over the past six years. The PBF has also had a specific focus on youth and recently approved a project to strengthen youth engagement in the 2017 elections.
  
11. Mr. Björn Gillsäter of The World Bank informed the meeting of the development of a new framework for Liberia and an increase in support from \$308 million to \$370

million. This would be agreed by July of this year, in advance of a new government, with the opportunity to make adjustments. It was noted that the IMF should also be included in the UNCT mapping exercise.

12. The Permanent Representative of Liberia to the UN, H.E. Lewis Brown expressed Liberia's appreciation and wish for continued international support and desire to be a success story.

### **Conclusion**

13. Ms. Mari Yamashita of PBSO recapped the suggestion of a political support conference or a dedicated fund for Liberia and the identification of investment in youth as a key peacebuilding priority. Ms. Yamashita suggested that the example of Liberia be fed into the Secretary-General's forthcoming report on sustaining peace to demonstrate how the UN can do business differently.
14. The Chair thanked the meeting for its active participation and interest. She noted that this would be the first of many discussions with UN senior leadership in Liberia on how the PBC can accompany, provide strategic support, and mobilize resources, for sustaining peace in Liberia.

\*\*\*\*\*