

Summary of the Peacebuilding Commission Meeting on:

“Peacebuilding and sustaining peace in West Africa: recent developments in Liberia, Sierra Leone and the Sahel”

16 July 2018

1. On 16 July, the Peacebuilding Commission (PBC) convened a meeting on “Peacebuilding and sustaining peace in West Africa: recent developments in Liberia, Sierra Leone and the Sahel”. The meeting was chaired by H.E. Mr. Ion Jinga, Chair of the PBC, and members were briefed by Mr. Mohamed Ibn Chambas, Special Representative of the Secretary General for West Africa and the Sahel.
2. In his opening remarks the Chair thanked SRSR Chambas for briefing the PBC on the latest developments in West Africa and the Sahel, including on Liberia, Sierra Leone, The Gambia and the Sahel, which are top priorities for the Commission. He stressed the progress made in West Africa in the organization and conduct of electoral processes. He noted that several important elections have been held in quasi-peaceful contexts and allowed thousands of citizens to exercise their right to vote and to choose their candidates. He reflected on how the Gambian, Sierra Leonean and Liberian transition examples showcase the increasing determination of their populations to own election processes and achieve positive political change. In that regard, he highlighted that freedom of expression and assembly are critical for the sustenance of democracy. He stressed that the PBC should continue to urge Member States to take concrete steps in opening space for peaceful protests and demonstrations and for security forces to act in line with national and international human rights standards when policing demonstrations. He stressed the key role of civil society organisations, including human rights defenders, in the democracy process and highlighted the need for sustained support to their efforts.
3. SRSR Chambas further stressed the continued role of PBSO to provide the necessary resources to support peacebuilding efforts related to transparent and credible elections to ensure a level playing field for all candidates. He highlighted the importance of support for the increased political participation of women, (including with a view to increase the number of women elected or appointed to senior government positions). He warned that democratic gains in the region are not immune from reversal. He stressed the need for increased engagement by the PBC and encouraged the PBC to provide more support to ECOWAS and its Member States at this crucial period.
4. On the Sahel SRSR Chambas briefed on the deteriorating security situation, with daily attacks in Mali and increased attacks by Boko Haram in Niger. He recognized the efforts of the G5 Sahel Force, and highlighted the Brussels Round Table (organized by the EU) as helpful to raise resources for the G5 Sahel Force. Further he explained that conflicts between farmers and herders are on the rise in the Sahel region, particularly in central Mali. He noted that these conflicts are sparked by competition over shrinking natural resources. He recognized that

countries of the region have responded to these security challenges by coordinating their efforts in the Sahel and in the fight against Boko Haram (via the multinational joint task force). These efforts have had a positive impact, yet the space of operations for Boko Haram has not shrunk enough. He stressed the importance of coordination and partnerships, noting that the deployment of troops from many countries has provided much needed intelligence and police support for border security to better address transnational crimes linked to the financing of terrorism. He concluded by arguing that peacebuilding interventions have been largely unsuccessful at addressing transnational organized crime in many West African countries. Over the coming year, UNOWAS looks forward to continuing working with the PBC and relevant partners on a more nuanced analysis of this phenomenon, with the objective of developing appropriate conceptual and operational frameworks to best address the challenges it poses to democratic governance.

5. Mr. Oscar Fernandez-Taranco, Assistant Secretary-General for Peacebuilding Support, briefed Member States on how the newly launched UN Support Plan effectively realigns the United Nations Integrated Strategy for the Sahel with the priorities of the countries in the Sahel region, as well as the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the African Union Agenda 2063 and the prevention agenda of the Secretary General. He noted that the Support Plan provides a framework to mobilize partners at international and regional levels, national institutions, the private sector, and civil society organizations to work towards enhancing inclusive and effective governance, strengthening capacity of national governments to achieve peace, stability and inclusive development in the Sahel. He added that the Support Plan is firmly anchored in respect for national priorities, national leadership and ownership, and will also ensure that the United Nations is more integrated, comprehensive, strategic and coherent in support of the countries in the Sahel region. He stressed that through innovative, catalytic and risk-tolerant programmes, PBSO has been very active in support of prevention, social cohesion and community security at both national and cross-border levels in the Sahel. He informed the PBC that in 2017, PBF allocated USD 22 million to Mali, Niger, Burkina Faso and Chad, with a focus on the Governance and Security pillars of the United Nations Integrated Strategy for the Sahel. He announced that in 2018, the PBF has set aside USD 46 million for the Sahel region, including USD 33 million to be allocated to national programmes and USD 12 million to support regional and cross-border programmes.
6. The Chair of the Sierra Leone configuration, H.E. Marc-Andre Blanchard, outlined some of the good practices from the PBC in Sierra Leone. They included: PBC partnerships with EU, AU, ECOWAS and host authorities; support of coordination efforts by the Resident Coordinator; broad and holistic support by the PBC and PBF to the electoral process; and coordinated bilateral support including contributions to the National Electoral Commission. He further highlighted the need for the international community to support the new government so that it can deliver on its new development plans.
7. H.E. Ms. Irina Schoulgin Nyoni, Chair of the Liberia PBC Configuration, shared good practices and key recommendations. She highlighted the need for continued engagement by the UN, including the PBC, during transitions. She stressed the importance of national ownership and the need to avoid having parallel and cookie-cutter plans, or duplicating efforts needs and overlapping strategies. She noted that lessons learned in Liberia that could be used

in future settings included: the need for mandates formulated by the Security Council to take into account national ownership; the importance of providing peace dividends to the population, as well as engaging youth and women. Moreover, she stressed the need to ensure that Resident Coordinators have the capacity and support to implement their mandates. She also highlighted PBC's key role in broadening and strengthening partnerships for more effective implementation.

8. Member States welcomed the briefings and, in their interventions, highlighted the following points:
 - Highlighted the usefulness of the meeting, which included updates on latest developments from the ground and best practices from country configurations, all helping to find ways forward to address the security, development, good governance and human rights challenges in West Africa and the Sahel.
 - Expressed concerns over the instability in the Sahel region and increased activities of Boko Haram in the Lake Chad Basin.
 - Welcomed and expressed support for the UN Support Plan for the Sahel, and highlighted the need for coordinated and coherence in support of the Sahel region.
 - Highlighted the need for funding to the Trust Fund for Liberia, with the aim of reducing dependency on development aid over time.
 - Recognized the importance of partnerships, including with the private sector in Sierra Leone, as well as cross-border cooperation. In this regard, PBF cross-border work was mentioned as an illustration of how the UN can work across regions.
 - Highlighted other priorities, including supporting the region in security sector reform, and national reconciliation and dialogue
9. ASG Fernandez-Taranco highlighted that, while the PBF has a high capacity to quickly disperse funds, not enough is available. He also suggested that the PBC annual session could serve as a stocktaking exercise on the UN Support Plan for the Sahel, and noted the value of the PBC as a forum to share good practices, including from other regions and countries such as Central and Latin America.