

Chair's Summary

PBC Sierra Leone Configuration Informal Expert-level Meeting

21 May 2015 (11:00am-1:00pm)

Introduction by the Chair

1. On 21 May 2015, the PBC Sierra Leone Configuration met at the expert-level to discuss the current situation in Sierra Leone, including the National Ebola Recovery Plan (NERP) and exchange views regarding the workplan for the Sierra Leone configuration. The PBC Chair provided a briefing on the latest visit to Sierra Leone and a UNDP representative briefed on its recovery plans, regional economic outlook and strategies for Sierra Leone.

2. The Chair opened the meeting stating that before the start of the Ebola crisis, the Sierra Leone Configuration was a successful example of the PBC and a Government working together and committing to peacebuilding effort. Fortunately, the worst of the Ebola crisis appears to be behind us, though mindful that this crisis will not truly be over until every country in the region is 100% Ebola-free. The Chair highlighted that the international community should take note of Sierra Leone's security forces who exhibited admirable professionalism throughout the Ebola crisis. The Chair emphasized that, without losing focus on the fight against Ebola, it is appropriate now to begin thinking about what comes next for Sierra Leone.

3. Presenting the updated Configuration workplan, the Chair stated that going forward, there seem to be two areas in particular that could pose a challenge to the peacebuilding gains that Sierra Leone has realised, especially in the context of post-Ebola recovery: upcoming elections and economic trends. He reiterated that as Chair of the Sierra Leone Configuration, Canada fully expected a positive outcome, and will remain committed, along with the rest of the Configuration, to provide any support that may be necessary leading up to elections. The Chair expressed concern over the economic situation in Sierra Leone, especially in the context of the post-Ebola recovery. While the effects of Ebola have had a severe impact on Sierra Leone's economy, wider trends such as falling commodity prices, poverty and unemployment are also imperilling the economic gains that Sierra Leone had previously seen.

4. The Chair also commended the constructive interaction between the three Configurations of Liberia, Guinea and Sierra Leone throughout the Ebola crisis. He stated that it will be important to continue that close working relationship, as the three countries have such strong geopolitical, cultural, and economic linkages.

Briefing by the Representative of the Sierra Leone Permanent Mission

5. The representative from the Sierra Leone Permanent Mission to the United Nations provided an overview of current situation on the ground and briefed on the NERP. He informed that the national development plan was interrupted due to the Ebola crisis and that the economy was in a full-scale recession. He stated that the NERP was a product of in-depth sectoral analysis, which assesses the impact of Ebola and how it relates to the country. A total of \$1.25 billion was needed

for the recovery. He highlighted the national priority areas, including health care, employment, economic growth and development and empowerment of women. Lastly, he recalled that the health crisis impacted the three-most affected countries. A sub-regional approach was needed to address the remaining challenges during the transition of the country towards resilience and prosperity.

Briefing by the Representative of UNDP

6. The UNDP representative also briefed on Sierra Leone's NERP, the national and regional economic outlook and recovery strategies as well as the role of the PBC. He stated that the all three countries lost a total of about \$809 million in GDP in 2015. West Africa may lose an average of \$3.6 billion per year between 2014 and 2017, while food security was also an issue of concern, particularly in Mali and Guinea-Bissau. Adversely affecting the economic situation for 2015 and beyond in Sierra Leone, there has been a collapse in commodity prices including iron ore. He emphasized that the implications for economic growth, domestic revenues, foreign exchange earnings and employment are substantial. He informed that the well-thought out NERP was in line with the Mano River Union Regional Recovery Strategy, which focuses on nine key areas: health, gender, youth development, social protection, agriculture, trade, infrastructure, ICT and governance. He provided seven potential roles for the PBC in economic development recovery and planning:

- i) Provide policy and coordination support to the Government,
- ii) Continue to advise the Government in its peacebuilding transition, stabilization and resilience building processes,
- iii) Support preparation and launch of an updated fragility assessment,
- iv) Support the revision and update of the benchmarks of the Mutual Accountability Framework to reflect the Ebola crisis with the support of the New Deal facility,
- v) Activate and build capacity of existing local conflict resolution structures to mitigate, resolve or diffuse potential conflicts,
- vi) Strengthen the capacity of key security and justice agencies and
- vii) Provide support for the upcoming elections.

7. The PBC Chair representative briefed the meeting on the Chair's last visit to West Africa. He emphasized that peacebuilding priorities must be integrated into recovery efforts and the importance of the regional approach to recovery. He stressed that the window of recovery is now. He strongly emphasized the need to shape and provide a comprehensive narrative, coherent and united message at the upcoming the Secretary-General's International Ebola Recovery Conference on 10 July.

Interventions from the Floor

8. Many Member States emphasized the importance of crisis management and the need for an early warning system to prevent crises in the future. A few Member States emphasized the need and importance of the peacebuilding dimension to be well reflected in the upcoming Conference. One Member State inquired about the impact of Ebola on the political process, including the constitutional review. Other members stated the need to focus on other priorities, such as security, land and human rights issues. A few members reiterated the importance of having the national

and regional strategies aligned. One member said that while the PBC should assist in raising funds and resources, national governments should also re-examine internal resources for their revised needs.

9. The Chair concluded the meeting making reference to the next step in the workplan, where the Chair plans to visit Sierra Leone in the summer to discuss the country situation post-Ebola as well as one year after the closedown of UNIPSIL.
