

Peacebuilding Commission
Informal Meeting on the Situation in The Gambia
4 December 2017

Chairperson's Summary of the Discussion

- On 4 December, the Peacebuilding Commission (PBC) convened a meeting on the situation in The Gambia. The meeting was chaired by H.E. Mr. Cho Tae-yul, Chair of the PBC. The meeting was convened, upon the request of the Government of The Gambia, to discuss the country's peacebuilding priorities.
- The Chair opened the meeting by welcoming H.E. Mr. Abubacarr M. Tambadou, Attorney General and Minister of Justice of The Gambia, and H.E. Mr. Mamadou Tangara, Permanent Representative of The Gambia, and thanking them for The Gambia's continued interest in engaging with the PBC. He recalled that, following his joint visit to The Gambia in March 2017, with Ambassador Tangara of The Gambia and Mr. Oscar Fernandez-Taranco, Assistant Secretary-General for Peacebuilding Support, the Commission held the first meeting on The Gambia in April 2017 to discuss the country's peacebuilding priorities. He noted that during that meeting the Commission welcomed the initiative of engaging with The Gambia at its critical time of transition and gave assurances to support the Gambian Government in its efforts to build and sustain peace. The Chair also recalled the informal luncheon meeting held at the Permanent Mission of the Republic of Korea, on the margin of the PBC Annual Session on 30 June, co-hosted by The Gambia, Republic of Korea, PBSO and IPI, with the participation of a wide range of stakeholders, including senior officials from the UN Secretariat, World Bank, African Development Bank and UNDP, who all expressed their strong commitment to support The Gambia's peacebuilding priorities. The Chair noted that today's PBC meeting was timely in view of the fact that the National Development Plan of The Gambia was being finalized and The Gambia was planning to convene a Development Partners Roundtable Conference scheduled for February 2018.
- H.E. Mr. Abubacarr M. Tambadou briefed the PBC on the key areas of the ongoing institutional reforms in The Gambia, starting with the constitutional review which will begin in 2018. He noted that the review process will be inclusive and will include all Gambians, including those living abroad. He underscored the importance of enforcing the provisions of the constitution through a number of institutional reforms. He noted that the Ministry of Justice would need to reinforce its capacities, including by attracting Gambian expertise from the diaspora. He also referred to the need for strengthening the judiciary by training Gambian people and the importance of reforming the security sector, and in this connection, the need for the security sector to gain the respect of the people. He also identified the reform of the prison system as

another institutional reform priority. In view of the conditions of detention under the previous Gambian Government, prison reform is also a human rights priority of the new government. The Minister also identified the liberalization of the media and the role of civil society organizations as another reform priority for the government. Finally, he informed that the Truth, Reconciliation and Reparation Commission was a key tool to bridge the past and the future of The Gambia. The Commission was created to find the truth; identify those who bear the gravest responsibilities; and look at reparations that are not only financial compensations but also scholarships and other forms of support for victims of violations. The Minister thanked PBSO for providing PBF support to pursue transitional justice.

- Ms. Ade Mamonyane Lekoetje, UN Resident Coordinator in The Gambia, recalled that The Gambia had a tense but peaceful political transition following the presidential election of 1 December 2016. In this connection, she welcomed the coordinated support provided by the UN and underscored the importance of the country building on lessons and experiences of other countries, including Burkina Faso, Sierra Leone and South Africa. The Resident Coordinator provided Member States with an overview of the political and socio-economic situation, noting that the political stability in the country, if sustained, would allow the economic growth to reach 3% in 2017 and inflation to remain stable. However, economic growth remained vulnerable to external shocks, and long-term development was facing a number of challenges, including a small internal market, limited access to finance, limited capacity to build effective institutions, and migration. She noted that the main priority of the UN in the country was to support good governance, accountability, social cohesion, national reconciliation and a revitalized and transformed economy for the wellbeing of all Gambians. She mentioned that The Gambian Government is finalizing its National Development Plan and is planning to hold a Development Partners Roundtable Conference in February 2018 on which she will share the details once they are finalized.
- Mr. Oscar Fernandez-Taranco, ASG for Peacebuilding Support, noted that this meeting, which provided an opportunity for The Gambian Government to exchange views on its peacebuilding priorities and challenges, further testifies to the improved working methods of the Commission. With regards to UN support to The Gambia, he stressed that national ownership should always be the guiding principle, and the UN valued the needs and views of the government and other national stakeholders in the identification of priorities and the design of UN support to The Gambia. He noted that expedited post-transition programmatic support, particularly through the rapid approval of the PBF-funded quick-win projects, was key to ensuring smooth political transition in The Gambia. He also underscored the value of targeted projects which helped maintain focus on and support the government's key peacebuilding priorities. He concluded noting that, the coordinated high-level visits by senior UN officials over the past year demonstrated the commitment of the Organization for peacebuilding and sustaining peace in The Gambia.

- Member States welcomed the opportunity to discuss the peacebuilding priorities of The Gambia and raised the following issues:
 - National ownership has to drive all efforts to support countries.
 - In conflict affected countries, it may take time for the population to regain trust in state institutions. In this connection, inclusive truth and reconciliation commissions can have an important role to play. The case of Colombia was identified as a relevant one in this regard.
 - The sustained support of the international community, in particular the financial support, is key to ensuring conflict-affected countries build and sustain peace. The role of regional organizations, including regional financial institutions, should be highlighted.
 - It is important to provide a space where countries can learn lessons from other peacebuilding processes. The PBC has been doing an important job in this regard.
 - South-South cooperation should be further strengthened.
 - Institution and capacity building is a clear priority for conflict affected countries.
 - Youth, as an important segment of the Gambian population, has an important role to play in building and sustaining peace in the country.
 - The PBC should continue to assist The Gambia in its efforts to hold the Development Partners Roundtable Conference in 2018.

- The Chair concluded the meeting by expressing his hope that the Commission further deliberates on ways to assist The Gambia with its efforts to build and sustain peace, including the Development Partners Roundtable Conference that is expected to be held in early 2018.
