

PBC Ambassadorial meeting on Liberia

31 January 2019

Chairperson's summary of the Discussion

1. On 31 January 2019, the Peacebuilding Commission (PBC) held an Ambassadorial-level meeting on Liberia. The meeting, chaired by **H.E. Mr. Olof Skoog**, Chair of the Liberia Configuration, was convened to provide a platform for the Government of Liberia to launch and present Liberia's new five-year national development plan, the Pro-Poor Agenda for Prosperity and Development (PAPD), 2018-2023.
2. In his introductory remarks, the Chair highlighted that the Pro-Poor Agenda for Prosperity and Development (PAPD) reinforced the vital link between sustainable development and sustaining peace. The Chair praised the progress made in Liberia, illustrated by peaceful democratic elections, but noted the complexity of the challenges in Liberia, where root causes of conflict and development challenges have yet to be fully addressed. He highlighted Liberia as an important example from which to draw lessons on transitions, noting especially the importance of financial support to transitions from the international community and UN system. In this regard, the Commission reaffirmed its commitment to accompanying Liberia in pursuit of its longer-term peacebuilding and development goals by serving as a platform to marshal resources and foster close coordination among partners within and beyond the UN.
3. **H.E. Mr. Gbehzohngar Milton Findley**, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Liberia, expressed appreciation for the support of the international community to Liberia's peaceful transition, including the Peacebuilding Fund (PBF)'s recent approval of \$5 million in support of peacebuilding and reconciliation programmes. He announced that the Government has passed the Land Rights Act and the Local Government Act and has strengthened enforcement of laws on violence against women. He thanked the PBC for giving the Government a platform to present the Pro-Poor Agenda for Prosperity and Development (PAPD) and stressed to Member States the significance of the Liberia Multi-partner Trust Fund (LMPTF) to further galvanize necessary and predictable funding to actualize the PAPD. He highlighted the PAPD's focus on security sector reform, good governance, strengthening of the justice system, national reconciliation and respect for human rights and dignity as imperative for Liberia to reach its long-term development and peacebuilding goals.
4. **H.E. Mr. Samuel Tweah**, Minister of Finance and Development Planning of Liberia, thanked the PBC for its support during Liberia's transition and for the opportunity to present the PAPD. He acknowledged the importance of the PBF's initial support of \$5 million to the LMPTF and the preliminary approval of projects focusing on reconciliation, vulnerability, social protection, youth development and agriculture. He explained the four pillars of the PAPD: 1) power to the

people; 2) economy and jobs; 3) sustaining the peace; 4) and governance and transparency. He clarified that the cost of full implementation of the PAPD would total \$6.2 billion and stressed the need for strengthened partnerships with key actors to improve coordination and resource mobilization. In this regard, he noted that private sector investment, the LMPTF and the Liberia Reconstruction Trust Fund (LRTF) were all critical to advancing Liberia's domestic resource mobilization strategy. Mr. Tweah reaffirmed the Government's commitment to strengthening the agriculture sector, along with securing investments and partnerships in the private sector. He appealed to the PBF to continue its support.

5. **H.E. Mr. Varney Sirleaf**, Minister of Internal Affairs of Liberia, underscored that the PAPD was informed by the Liberia Peacebuilding Plan, pursuant to Security Council Resolution 2333 (2016), and developed by the Government in collaboration with the UN. The Peacebuilding Plan consolidated commitments across development, peace and security and human rights efforts with the view to prevent Liberia's relapse into conflict. Similarly, the PAPD highlights the linkages between peace and development in ending fragility, addressing root causes of conflict and promoting a cohesive society in line with the 2030 Agenda. A holistic approach was imperative for addressing key challenges, such as limited capacity in security and rule of law sectors, slow progress in national reconciliation and limited progress in implementation of critical reforms. Mr. Sirleaf also noted Liberia's progress over the last 15 years through the peaceful transition from one democratically elected government to another, the passing of the Land Rights Act, and putting in place infrastructure for peace that includes county and district peace committees, county security councils, and a national centre for coordination for early response mechanisms.
6. **Ms. Frances Greaves**, Chairperson of the National Civil Society Council of Liberia (NCSCCL) and CEO and Founder of Voice of the Voiceless, noted the role of civil society in supporting the Government's efforts to develop the PAPD. The Government needed to ensure that the people would continue to be empowered and involved during the implementation process. In this context, she highlighted that job creation, especially for the youth, and inclusion of disadvantaged and disenfranchised youth were of paramount importance. She also emphasized good governance and transparency, the need to build trust with the public by ensuring updates on the progress of PAPD implementation, and the need to strengthen institutions responsible for monitoring and accountability.
7. **Mr. Yacoub El Hillo**, the UN Resident Coordinator of Liberia, explained that the PAPD told the story of a country that has worked hard to complete a complex transition and maintain stability in a fragile context. It remained important for the international community to look at the country through the "lens of prevention." The RC pointed out that the withdrawal of the peacekeeping mission in Liberia had left huge resource and capacity gaps. As the UN prepared future transitions, he strongly recommended that filling in post-transition resource and capacity gaps become a system-wide responsibility with adequate funding commitments. In this regard, he described the LMPTF a smart tool to support active engagement by the UN Country Team and national counterparts to consolidate peace. The RC appealed to Member States for more support

to the LMPTF, especially to the national window that allows funding to be directly allocated to national institutions that had been pre-qualified within the PPAD framework.

8. **Mr. Oscar Fernandez-Taranco**, Assistant Secretary-General for Peacebuilding Support, noted that financing is ultimately at the crux of supporting Liberia’s longer-term peacebuilding and development goals. From the twin resolutions on sustaining peace, the Secretary-General’s Report on Peacebuilding and Sustaining Peace to the UN reforms, many parts of the UN have focused over the past five years on addressing how the UN could work together to better support Member States in conflict settings in a more coherent manner. In this context, Liberia was a litmus test. The country has nearly all elements to sustain peace—an enabling environment for achievement of the SDGs, committed and inclusive national leadership, a successful transition with a strengthened RCO and strong partnerships — except predictable and sustained financing. He endorsed the LMPTF as a key tool to overcome fragmentation of efforts and called on Member States for their support. He also underscored PBSO’s role, as part of the Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs (DPPA), to help align Member States and UN system contributions to the national development plan through LMPTF and to accelerate achievement of the SDGs and peacebuilding priorities such as reconciliation, dialogue, inclusion and partnerships.
9. **H.E. Mr. Dee-Maxwell Saah Kemayah, Sr.**, the Permanent Representative of Liberia to the United Nations, reiterated the important correlation between peace and sustainable development; and noted that the 2030 Agenda served as the reference point for the development of the PAPD. He emphasized the need for resource mobilization around the PAPD over the coming 5-year period and called on international partners for support. He highlighted various legislative acts in progress, such as legislation on domestic violence and the Kamara Abdullah Kamara Act of Press Freedom. He expressed the wish that Liberia will serve as an inspiration for other conflict-affected countries on what sustaining peace means in practice.
10. The **World Bank** expressed support through the UN-World Bank Country Partnership Framework, endorsed by the Board of Directors in November 2018. The Framework is aligned with the peacebuilding priorities of the PAPD and addresses three pillars of fragility: 1) transparency and accountability of the public sector and enabling environment of private sector to grow; 2) human development and human capital; and 3) narrowing the gap between urban and rural settlements.
11. Regional entities also noted the PAPD’s significance at a time when fragility continues to hamper development in the region. The **African Union (AU)** recognized that a peaceful and prosperous Liberia would not only bring peace within the country but also have a positive impact in the region. The **Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS)** noted that the four pillars of the PAPD are in line with regional priorities intended to foster greater integration. ECOWAS advocated for Liberia’s regional approach and promised the Government continued support, especially on access to justice.

12. Member States welcomed the briefing(s) and raised the following points:
- Commended Liberia for strong national leadership and progress in peacebuilding. They welcomed the inclusive process of developing the PAPD, and its attention to the peace and development nexus to address underlying root causes of conflict and remaining challenges, such as human development and security, job creation and private sector engagement, agricultural development, infrastructure and energy, national reconciliation, good governance and rule of law, transparency and accountability, and the inclusion of women and youth.
 - Emphasized the importance of engaging the private sector to promote long-term diversification of the economy and future growth. Some delegations encouraged the PBC to explore ways to engage with the private sector more creatively in Liberia. The Working Group of Business Environment (WGBE) was noted as a platform to explore private sector development. The UN-World Bank Country Partnership Framework (2018) was also noted as critical in this regard.
 - Noted that effective implementation of the PAPD would require resource commitments from all partners. Some members emphasized the role of the PBC in continuing to convene and mobilize resources with partners within and beyond the UN, including the World Bank and IFIs. One delegation noted that the PBF's recent approval of \$5 million to the LMPTF was politically significant as a demonstration of commitment and support, especially to projects involving women and youth.
 - Highlighted that peacebuilding in Liberia could not be achieved without regional stability and encouraged Liberia, as a successful transition country, to lead a more regional and holistic approach. Given the similar challenges faced by other countries in the region, including Sierra Leone, on issues such as land tenure, decentralization and local governance, one delegation recommended that the PBC convene a regional platform of countries of the Mano River Union, along with regional and sub-regional organizations, to share good practices and lessons learned and strengthen partnerships in these areas.
 - Welcomed the PAPD's strong focus on the role of civil society, women and youth, and recommended the Government continue its inclusive approach during implementation and evaluation of the PAPD.
13. The Chair concluded the meeting and proposed the following action points to the PBC for its consideration:
- Continue providing the Government of Liberia with a platform to present its peacebuilding priorities to the international community as the PAPD is implemented, while bringing coherence to international peacebuilding efforts in support of the Government.
 - Provide a platform to present the positive impact of the PBF and LMPTF on the implementation of the PAPD, in further galvanizing Member State support.
 - Explore ways to engage with the World Bank, other IFIs and the private sector in support of peacebuilding in Liberia.
 - Bring more focus to the regional approach, by fostering conversations on peacebuilding and development challenges in the countries of the Mano River Union, including the sharing of good practices and lessons learned in peacebuilding.