

Ambassadorial-Level Meeting of the Peacebuilding Commission on Sierra Leone
10 December 2020
Chair's Summary

1. On 10 December, the Chair of the Peacebuilding Commission (PBC), H.E. Mr. Bob Rae, convened a virtual Ambassadorial-level meeting on Sierra Leone to take stock of the country's efforts to consolidate peace gains in recent years and identify development and peacebuilding priorities that merit continuous support from the Commission. In preparation of the meeting, the Government shared with the PBC a roadmap outlining the country's peacebuilding priorities following the conclusion of the Sierra Leone Country Configuration. These included: (i) national ownership; (ii) promoting peace and national cohesion, including through the implementation of key priorities of the national development, and particularly the establishment of a Commission for Peace and National Cohesion; (iii) investing in human capital development; economic diversification; institutional resilience and governance; (iv) ensuring effective COVID-19 recovery and responses. The Chair noted that the PBC had engaged with Sierra Leone over the past 14 years in support of key milestones in its peacebuilding journey, including the transitions from UN peacekeeping and special political missions to the UNCT, the management of four peaceful electoral processes, the response to the Ebola epidemic, the rebuilding of the country's institutional framework and the implementation of its national development plans and priorities. He welcomed continuous engagement of the PBC in support of Sierra Leone's peacebuilding priorities as these were elaborated in the government's roadmap.
2. The UN Deputy Secretary-General (DSG), H.E. Mrs. Amina J. Mohammed, welcomed the government's roadmap, which she explained prioritizes women's empowerment through the meaningful participation of women in decision-making processes. She also informed of her visit to Freetown on 14 November, when she had the opportunity to witness firsthand the country's investments in the Sustainable Development Goals and progress towards consolidating peace and stability. She noted the government's political will to promote sustainable development, enhance inclusive governance, improve access to justice, protection and human rights, including to fight against all forms of gender-based violence. The DSG also informed that, during her visit, there was widespread acknowledgment of the need to support youth employment and empowerment, and she called for more action to enable young people to achieve sustainable livelihoods and promote their full and free participation in the social, economic and political spheres of life.
3. The Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, H.E. Mrs. Nabeela F. Tunis, underscored Sierra Leone's determination to continue its engagement with the PBC within the framework of the government's roadmap. The Minister stated that the PBC should continue to use its unique convening, advocacy and bridging role to mobilize support for the

implementation of the priorities outlined in the roadmap, including support for the government's efforts to secure concessional financing and promote foreign investments as well as to increase resources for educational and other public institutions, with a focus on expanding economic opportunities for the youth.

4. The Minister of Planning and Economic Development, H.E. Dr. Francis Mustapha Kai-Kai, stated that Sierra Leone had made significant strides in peace and development following the end of the war in 2002, while also noting that continuous efforts were needed to sustain the country's peacebuilding gains. He reiterated that the country's roadmap for future engagement with the PBC was aligned with the government's Mid-Term National Development Plan (2018-2023), which unfortunately, as he explained, was expected to be negatively affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. The Minister stressed the need for PBC support for the implementation of 'bankable' projects under each programme area of the National Development Plan, in collaboration with Sierra Leone's development and technical partners. The Minister also informed that revenue collection had been identified as an important challenge that limited the government's ability to invest in the Medium-Term National Development Plan. To overcome this challenge, the Government developed an Integrated National Financing Framework (INFF) which aims to transform the way the government manages and mobilizes development financing and engages with key actors in the economy (private, public, domestic and international) for financing the SDGs. The Minister drew the attention of the PBC in support of the implementation of this framework.
5. The Executive Director of the Sierra Leone Chapter of African Women Leaders Network, Ms. Valnora Edwin, called for PBC support for increased women's participation in political processes, underscoring that civil society organizations (CSOs) are committed to play their role. She explained that the constitutional review process should provide a platform for increasing the level of woman's participation in decision-making and called for a non-partisan approach in promoting a decentralization policy which should help carve space for women to play a more meaningful role in socio-economic and political spheres of life. She highlighted the importance of a national vision to mitigate the polarized political environment, explaining that "winner takes all" approaches to governance weakens progress. She emphasized the importance of the 'Independent Commission for Peace and National Cohesion', which at the time of the time was in the process of being established by law and explained that civil society was ready to help ensure that the Commission could pave the way for political cohesion and nation building by bringing the diverse groups of Sierra Leoneans together. She also explained that post-COVID recovery provided another opportunity to help promote women's and youth inclusion in decision making processes.

Member States welcomed the briefings and made the following observations:

- They recognized the PBC accompaniment of Sierra Leone (under the leadership of Canada, the Chair of the Country-Configuration) over the past 14 years, and the country's remarkable achievements in peacebuilding and sustaining peace. They noted that Sierra Leone had made significant strides in national healing, reconciliation, social cohesion, solidarity, and human capital investment.
- Building on the DSG's visit to Sierra Leone on 14 November and taking into consideration the governments roadmap for future engagement with the PBC, they reiterated their support to the government's efforts to further promote peace and national cohesion, including through the implementation of the 2019-2023 National Development Plan and by fast-tracking the establishment of a Commission for Peace and National Cohesion. They also expressed full support for the government's efforts to invest in human capital development, economic diversification, and enhanced institutional governance, while at the same time ensuring effective COVID-19 response and recovery.
- They encouraged stronger action to ensure meaningful participation of women in decision-making processes and promotion of youth employment and empowerment, with special emphasis on the need to prioritize free quality education for girls. They also stressed the importance of concluding the Constitutional review process, which would enable the inclusion of ethnic minority groups into governance structures.
- They acknowledged the need for the government to build trust between its citizens and State institutions, including by strengthening anti-corruption and governance accountability measures. In that regard, they noted the establishment of an independent Commission on Peace and National Cohesion, stressing the need for inclusivity and the involvement of all political parties.
- They noted the socio-economic consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic and the risk of exacerbating political tensions, which could undermine peacebuilding gains. They stressed the need for bipartisan cooperation to help address lingering tensions and called for further progress in the work of the Commission of Inquiry, through a consultative process and based on interactive dialogue including all political parties, CSOs and citizens.
- They recognized the critical role of the PBF, which has buttressed national efforts over the last decade to rebuild State institutions, improve security, and promote inclusive governance and reconciliation, and welcomed current PBF support for youth empowerment and promotion of human rights and gender equality.
- They encouraged Sierra Leone to continue sharing its success stories, good practices and lessons learnt with the PBC, and committed to supporting UN system-wide efforts to help mobilize resources in support of peacebuilding in Sierra Leone, including through the MRU-UN mechanism and through collaboration with ECOWAS. In that regard, they recognized the important role of the Mano River Union UN group in New York, represented by the Permanent Representatives of Côte d'Ivoire, Guinea, Liberia, and Sierra Leone.