

**Summary of the visit of H.E. Mr. Mårten Grunditz, Chair of the Liberia Configuration,  
Peacebuilding Commission, to Liberia  
30 June to 3 July 2014**

**Background and purpose of the visit**

1. H.E. Mr. Mårten Grunditz, Chair of the Liberia Configuration of the Peacebuilding Commission (PBC) paid his first visit to Monrovia, Liberia from 30 June to 3 July 2014. He was accompanied by Ms. Kaori Minami, Peacebuilding Officer of the UN Peacebuilding Support Office (PBSO). The preparation and implementation of the Chair's programme was carried out with the excellent support provided by UNMIL and was appreciated by the Chair.
2. The purpose of the Chair's visit was to hold discussions, in close collaboration with UNMIL, with a range of stakeholders within the Government of Liberia, the United Nations, the donor community, civil society and others, concerning peacebuilding efforts in Liberia. Discussions covered a wide range of topics including the implementation of the Roadmap for National Healing and Reconciliation; progress on justice and security reforms; land management; natural resource management; civil society inclusivity and collaboration with the international financial institutions.
3. During his visit, the Chair met with the President of Liberia, Minister of Internal Affairs, the Chairman of the Land Commission, representatives of the donor community, the World Bank Office in Monrovia, co-chairs of the Justice and Security Joint Programme, senior officials of UNMIL, UN Country Team members, and civil society organization representatives.
4. In his meetings with the stakeholders mentioned above, special appreciation was conveyed through the Chair to former Chair of the Liberia Configuration, H.E. Mr. Staffan Tillander, for his strong dedication and leadership in helping to steer Liberia's peacebuilding efforts during his two-year term. Appreciation was also expressed to outgoing Assistant Secretary-General Judy Cheng Hopkins of PBSO for her many years of contribution to peacebuilding in Liberia.
5. Liberia still faces many peacebuilding challenges as 2014 and 2017 elections draw near, and as UNMIL continues its gradual drawdown of its military presence. There has been progress in a number of aspects under the three pillars of the Statement of Mutual Commitments, yet there remains a number of important areas in which further progress is required, in particular, in terms of implementation of national policies and recommendations.
6. The situation in Liberia overall remains peaceful. Progress is recorded in several areas, but fragility persists in others. There is considerable popular dissatisfaction with the government caused by very high unemployment, inequalities and insufficient inclusivity in charting the future course in key policy areas. There remain a number of areas where progress is slow, and the sustainability of progress is in doubt due to financial constraints

and an insufficient national revenue base. Some challenges ahead are described within the following summaries of the Chair's meetings in Monrovia. Some of them require increased focus by the United Nations, the national authorities of Liberia and the international community as a whole, such as: 1) the expansion, training and accountability mechanisms of the national police, border services and immigration service and, most critically, the provision to these services of the necessary enablers and appropriate maintenance; 2) the Government's continued commitment and release of funding for the regional justice and security hubs and the reconciliation roadmap; and 3) encouraging increased inclusivity of civil society, including women's groups, in important national processes such as national reconciliation, land reform, natural resources policy and in the coming development of a New Deal Compact to which the government has committed itself.

### **Meeting with President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf**

7. The Chair commended Liberia for the progress made so far, but observed that there were still several areas of fragility where efforts must be re-doubled. He said that as far as her collaboration with the PBC, the country had set a good example. On justice and security reforms, the Chair pointed to four issues: 1) the need for the government to provide sustained financing for the LNP and BIN; 2) the need for the Government to release the \$1 million committed for the start-up of the third regional justice and security hub and to include in the budget costs the operation of the hubs as recurrent expenditure and not project expenditure; 3) the importance for the Land Rights Law to be approved as soon as possible and for a Land Authority to follow; 4) the importance of more progress in regard to the national reconciliation process, and the process to become inclusive and less dependent on international support (including the PBF).
8. On the hubs, the Chair said they represented an important step in decentralization and in improving access to justice. He reminded of the Government's funding commitment of \$1 million for the start-up of hub 3, a sum which is yet to be released. He also reminded of the need for the Government to commit to and release sufficient funding for the recurrent costs for hubs 1, 2 and 3. The President underlined that the hubs were important, and that the Legislature was also supportive of them. She indicated that there was a need to assess the operation of the hubs, adding that financing operations was a government responsibility and that the assessment would not mean a stop to the funding. Regarding the reported provision of only \$500,000 in the FY 2014-2015 budget for operating costs of the three hubs, the President said that there was a need for an assessment of those expenses including management, infrastructure and other aspects. The President took note of the information that operating costs of the Gbarnga Hub for the first year was as much as \$729,000.
9. In regard to police, the President acknowledged the need for sustained financing of training more LNP officers in view of the further drawdown of UNMIL. She noted that the Government had been seeking the assistance in training police in neighboring countries and had received positive reactions from the respective governments. She spoke positively of training senior police in Ghana. As to the 900 police per-annum commitment of police training, that might not be realistic. There was a need to review actual national capacity for

training/graduating police. The President added that she had also asked for an update on the status of the Police Act.

10. On national reconciliation efforts, the Chair noted that progress so far had been rather slow and that the PBF had played a dominant role in their financing. Given that there were signs of certain donor fatigue in this area, the Chair welcomed the allocation by the Government of \$3 million in the FY 2014/2015 budget for national reconciliation and expressed the hope that it would soon be released. He also hoped that the regular reporting on progress in the implementation of TRC (Truth and Reconciliation Commission) recommendations would be resumed. The President indicated that she would now ask Dr. Elwood Dunn to speed up action on the symbols project and indicated that the proposals would be put to a national referendum at the same time as the constitutional referendum. She informed that she had just received from the Governance Commission a draft report on progress in the implementation of TRC recommendations, which she would send to the Legislature in the coming days. The President expressed considerable satisfaction at how much had been done so far. She observed that reconciliation was more than the sum of the projects underway. It also encompassed areas such as the land issues, value systems and the educational system.
11. The Chair enquired about the timetable for the constitutional review. The President indicated that she would now task the Governance Commission and the Law Reform Commission to be the drivers of the constitutional review and to submit a draft document. The Constitution Review Committee would provide political oversight.
12. The President also raised to the Chair the wide gap between financial demands on the budget and the budget revenues. There was a strong need to broaden the tax base and improve tax collection and tax consciousness. She said Liberia welcomed assistance in regard to improving tax administration. These issues were being addressed by the Liberia Revenue Authority (LRA). International support for the work of the Liberia Anti-corruption Commission (LACC) and in the financing of land reform would also be welcomed.

### **National Reconciliation**

13. National reconciliation must be based on national ownership in a process led by the Government. The Chair repeatedly conveyed to government interlocutors that while there had been some progress in national projects for reconciliation, more needed to be done, and also reminded of the Government's financial commitment of \$3 million for these purposes.
14. On the Palava Hut project, the ethnographic study had been delayed due to difficulties in finding a qualified consultant to carry out the study, but the study was hoped to be completed by the end of the year to enable the project to go forward. It was made clear to the Chair in discussions with stakeholders that there was a need for stronger leadership to take the Palava Hut project forward. The Government needed to ensure that INCHR, as the lead agency, had the mandate, capacity, and leadership to fulfill its role.

15. The donor community underlined the importance of national reconciliation for the long-term stability of Liberia, not least in view of the drawdown of UNMIL. However, progress remained incremental since the launch of the Roadmap for Reconciliation in 2013. Funding for reconciliation by the Government was insufficient as was dialogue with and involvement of donors. Restorative justice had been sided as an issue.
16. Donors considered that the people of Liberia had no unified view as to what reconciliation encompasses. While there were differences of perception between the capital and counties, reconciliation was commonly perceived to include more than truth and justice. People tended to include also their broader interests, not least the developmental efforts of the Government. Liberia therefore needed to address root causes of conflict including marginalization and the strong expectations that benefits of economic growth would be spread more equally across the country and the people. There was also a need for the Government to address the issue of communicating its ambitions and priorities for the future to the people.
17. Donors expressed a willingness to continue encouraging the Government to move forward with the reconciliation efforts and to convey joint messages to government authorities in this regard. They noted the importance of the Government addressing socioeconomic grievances and corruption, improving inclusivity, resuming TRC reporting and strengthening coordination in the reconciliation effort amongst the executive, legislative and judiciary branches.
18. The Minister of Internal Affairs, in his meeting with the Chair, shared his view that some progress had been made on national reconciliation and noted recent meetings to discuss the Palava Hut project including the preparations for the ethnographic study. Efforts were, however, not always very visible. The Minister pointed out that working with small, community based groups (such as faith-based organizations) had proven useful as it made it easier for people to express their perceptions on reconciliation. On the follow-up on the recommendations of the Roadmap, it was hoped that the Peacebuilding and Reconciliation Steering Committee would be coordinating efforts. On the weakness of the INCHR, the Minister mentioned the recruitment process and logistical constraints in the Commission as being among the explanations.

## **Justice and security**

19. Through the Chair's meetings with national and international stakeholders, it was clear that more government budget allocations for justice and security reforms is needed and in good time in view of the 2017 elections approaching.
20. On the regional justice and security hubs, the reduction of the expected government's budget allocation to the operations of the hubs from \$750,000 to \$500,000 will effect operations of the Gbarnga Hub. The Chair was also informed of the delay and uncertainty in the progress of the hub in Harper due to the desire of the Government to acquire adjacent land and erect separate facilities for the judiciary. Given that uncertainty as well as the uncertainty surrounding the level of government financing for the operations of the three hubs, the Chair agreed with UNMIL's advice to the co-chairs Joint Security and Justice

Programme (JSJP) that the situation regarding hubs 2 and 3 projects should be assessed before proceeding with the start-up of hubs 4 and 5.

21. It was, however, clear from meetings with stakeholders that the hubs have captured the sense of decentralization and that more services have expressed interest in joining the hubs. Coordination of the hubs within the counties remained important.
22. As far as the police sector is concerned, the proposal to the Legislature for a Liberian Police Act was still in the hands of the President. The Chair had indicated the importance to expedite the process in his meeting with the President. The timeline for police training needed to be maintained, as the aim was to train 900 officers in the next fiscal year. Adequate funding was also needed to ensure 20% of recruits in the security force are female.
23. Stakeholders and donors indicated to the Chair that other challenges in the sector needed to be addressed. Among them were the strengthening of prosecutions and corrections services, including the bringing down of the extremely high number of pre-trial detentions, the need for concrete action in the anti-corruption area and the capacity building of security agencies and border services in the area of countering transnational crime.

#### **Land and natural resource issues**

24. There is continued progress on land issues. The Chairman of the Liberian Land Commission (LCC) underlined that land issues were important for peace, reconciliation as well as economic development. The proposal for a new Land Rights Law was now ready and would be presented to the President the next day. The Chairman was of the view that it stood a good chance to be passed by the legislature. The law has several objectives: equality of access to land, security of tenure, rule of law and improving land rights settlement/ management, and encouraging investment.
25. The institutional arrangements are being addressed in the drafting of a Land Authority Act. The LCC had also been exploring how the land deeds registration system could move to a title registration system that could help resolve claims.
26. The Government was providing little financial support. Funding for the steps so far has, according to the LCC Chairman, come from USAID, IBRD, SIDA and PBF; the PBF having contributed \$4 million for land programmes. The IBRD has made a commitment of \$15 to \$20 million for the next five-year period covering, inter alia the four clusters of policy. An urban land policy was expected to be established in the next two years. A mapping exercise of land in Monrovia, which would help track land records and claims, is underway. Switzerland had committed to contribute to its development.
27. The Chairman of the Commission, however, considered that existing funding commitments would not be sufficient and asked the Configuration Chair to convey a request to the PBF to engage with the LCC on that matter, particularly in regard to recurring costs for coming years. The Chair clarified that one of PBF's guiding objectives was to be catalytic in its

funding decisions, but that he would seek advice on the matter. He would, on the next occasion, also bring the matter of recurrent costs of land management to the attention of the President of Liberia.

28. The LCC Chairman also expressed his hope that the work of the Land Commission could be integrated into the regional justice and security hubs. He also underlined that education outreach was important and needed to be intensified so that land issues could be better conveyed and understood to the public.
29. An official of the World Bank office in Monrovia gave an extensive briefing to the Chair on the objectives and progress in the current study on natural resource issues which was in the last stages of drafting. The World Bank noted that there had been previous discussions with Ambassador Tillander on plans to hold a workshop with partners on natural resource issues, which the Chair agreed to follow up on.
30. The World Bank and UNDP conveyed their wish for the Chair to stress to government officials the need for clear leadership and coordination on natural resource and land issues, possibly through the existing inter-ministerial committee.

### **Other issues**

31. The Minister of Internal Affairs raised the importance of youth issues, underlining that it was not enough to develop skills but to also provide jobs to implement their skills. He noted that the Government had spent \$2 million in 2013 for youth issues.

### **Observations**

- Development partners should consider providing, well before 2017, support for necessary enablers (and their maintenance facilities) for the Liberian national police (LNP) and the Liberian border and immigration services (BIN).
- The Liberian government needs to ensure the allocation of and release of sufficient budgetary resources for justice, security and reconciliation purposes, in line with the SMC. There is a need for a specific clear commitment to a sustainable and adequate financing (and release thereof) of the recurring costs of the three first hubs. Delays in the implementation of the process need to be expedited, and limited resources allocated for the implementation of the hubs should be fully utilized. In addition, focus should be on the quality of services.
- The Liberian government also needs to allocate resources and budget for operations of land management within the recurring costs of the national budget. PBSO is asked to consider the possibility of extending further support for the land reform program.
- Development partners need to consider their possibilities to assist Liberia in her efforts to improve tax administration capacity and tax administration systems.
- There is a need for clear government leadership and coordination of the national natural resources policy and to make commitment as to the financing of its capacity building and management.

- The Configuration Chair should consider a workshop with partners on natural resources.
- Partners concerned should be reminded of the need to consult sufficiently broadly and inclusively on the content of the New Deal Compact for Liberia, and to ensure that it is sufficiently aligned with the SMC:s in order to allow for a reduction of the number of frameworks.

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