

**Summary of the visit of H.E. Mr. Guillermo E. Rishchynski, Chair of the
Peacebuilding Commission Sierra Leone Configuration, to Sierra Leone
25 to 28 February, 2014**

Executive Summary

1. Sierra Leone has made tremendous progress since the end of its civil war. The security and political situation in the country is relatively calm and stable. Important, independent national institutions have been built or strengthened in the areas of democratic governance, elections, human rights, anti-corruption, and security sector coordination. Rising levels of investment are driving economic growth and attention has turned to addressing large-scale development challenges.
2. Notwithstanding these positive trends, Sierra Leone will continue to confront a series of challenges. In the near future, the constitutional review process holds significant potential for addressing a series of issues relating to democratic governance, human rights, women's rights, natural resources, land tenure, and local government. At the same time, the inherently political nature of the process demands careful management. It will be especially important to ensure public ownership of the final draft through inclusive nation-wide consultations. In the longer term, security sector reform, including cross-border issues and the rule of law, will require further attention.
3. The Government of Sierra Leone is focused on implementation of the Agenda for Prosperity, which prioritizes laying the foundations for socioeconomic development and identifies outstanding peacebuilding issues. Sierra Leone's vision of becoming a middle income country by 2035, coupled with significant foreign investment in the natural resources sector, will continue to raise public expectations. Delivering improved governance, social services, and economic gains will be essential for convincing the broader population that they will continue to enjoy the dividends of peace.
4. Addressing the root causes of Sierra Leone's conflict remains a long-term issue. Combatting corruption, developing a more inclusive political system, addressing poverty as well as inequality, providing basic social services, and mitigating youth unemployment represent generational challenges. They also require steady change in Sierra Leone's political and social culture. It is essential that the development assistance provided after UNIPSIL's withdrawal continues to support national efforts to overcome these challenges. The early indications in this respect are positive.
5. The transformation from UNIPSIL to a Resident Coordinator-led United Nations Country Team (UNCT) has progressed smoothly. UNIPSIL, and the Executive-Representative of the Secretary-General (ERSG) in particular, deserves credit for managing a sensitive process to completing the mission's mandate in a timely manner. Likewise, the UNCT has taken impressive steps to bolster its capacity in relevant and applicable areas of UNIPSIL's former responsibility, notably political dialogue through the constitutional review, security sector reform, and human rights. The widespread

caution evident last year at the prospect of UNIPSIL's withdrawal has abated, partly due to concerted efforts to explain the nature of the United Nations transformation in Sierra Leone. Concerns were raised during the visit that pertain to the potential decrease in international attention once Sierra Leone is removed from the Security Council's agenda as well as any additional financial and technical gaps that might result from UNIPSIL's drawdown. In this respect, several interlocutors stressed the important role played by the ERSG as a triple-hatted (ERSG/Resident Representative/Resident Coordinator) senior United Nations official in ensuring strong coordination around a common, coherent approach amongst the highest levels of the Government, UNCT, national stakeholders, resident donors, and the international community.

6. The transformation of the UN presence in Freetown should be accompanied by a complementary evolution in the Peacebuilding Commission's (PBC) role. As requested by the Security Council, the PBC will scale down its engagement in the coming year by adopting a lighter and more responsive approach. As such, the PBC will move toward a mode of engagement based on requests from peacebuilding partners in the field, including the Government of Sierra Leone, international partners, and the UNCT. This approach will continue to be based on national peacebuilding priorities, as currently outlined in the Agenda for Prosperity. To enable this new approach, the Chair proposes to establish a smaller Steering Group with open membership, but focused on those most directly committed to Sierra Leone. The Chair will maintain informal communication with partners in Freetown and will convene the Steering Group on an as needed basis. These working methods will allow for a reduction in the number of formal meetings and other similar engagements. Finally, the Chair proposes to undertake a light stock-taking of this approach in the first quarter of 2015. This exercise will present an opportunity to make any necessary adjustments and consider whether Sierra Leone should exit from the Peacebuilding Commission's agenda.

Report of the Visit

7. During the course of his visit to Freetown from February 25 to 28, 2014, the Chair engaged with a wide range of national and international stakeholders. The program included meetings with H.E. President Ernest Bai Koroma, Foreign Minister Samura Kamura, Finance Minister Kaifala Marah, Minister of Justice and Attorney-General Frank Kargbo, the Political Parties Registration Commission, Anti-Corruption Commission, National Electoral Commission, political parties, civil society organizations, Mano River Union, the International Financial Institutions, the diplomatic corps, development partners, UNIPSIL, and the UNCT. The final agenda is attached as Annex A.

8. The Chair wishes to express his gratitude to the President, Government of Sierra Leone, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, UNIPSIL and the UNCT for the warm welcome he received and the extensive time granted by all for consideration of outstanding peacebuilding issues.

Government of Sierra Leone Priorities

9. H.E. President Ernest Bai Koroma noted that Sierra Leone has taken great strides in consolidating peace and democratic governance since the end of the civil war. The President stated that the country aims to become a middle income country by 2035. As such, the Agenda for Prosperity was launched last year and implementation is underway. The President identified several key challenges, including building the capacity of government institutions, empowering the youth, and promoting the private sector. Looking forward to continued collaboration with the Chair and the PBC, the President highlighted the need for the PBC, donors and international community to continue assisting the country in its efforts to address these challenges, as well as by supporting the constitutional review process.

10. The Ministers of Foreign Affairs and Finance and Economic Development, emphasized that the country has achieved a watershed moment with respect to the Security Council and is undergoing a positive transition to a more standard development footing. Both noted that these steps are a signal of Sierra Leone's success. Underscoring the importance of addressing outstanding challenges, the Ministers highlighted the Government's desire to make progress on governance, human rights, rule of law, the security sector, counter-terrorism, corruption, economic development and inequality, infrastructure, youth unemployment, and social issues, including education and building human capacity. This will require sustained advice and support from the international community, including the PBC and PBF. In addition, Sierra Leone plans to hold two significant international conferences in June: a Consultative Group meeting to promote the Agenda for Prosperity and a g7+ meeting on New Deal implementation. On this latter point, Sierra Leone has completed a fragility assessment and a Mutual Accountability Framework was agreed upon.

Political Situation

11. The majority of the political parties emphasized that Sierra Leone remains relatively calm and peaceful. They also acknowledged the important role played by the United Nations in helping to sustain the peace since the end of the war. The All People's Congress (APC) party underscored the importance of maintaining an inclusive political process and ensuring participation of other political parties on a level playing field. The main opposition, the Sierra Leone People's Party (SLPP), expressed appreciation for the timely visit of the PBC Chair. They admitted to initial concerns regarding the transformation of the UN presence in Sierra Leone and scaling down of the PBC's role. However, the party noted that the county has since made progress, that the United Nations will continue to provide support, and that Sierra Leone is increasingly well placed to consolidate peace on its own, partly due to the extensive assistance provided by UNIPSIL. The majority of the other political parties concurred that they would still expect and want support, including providing legal advice, funding, and technical assistance.

12. The Political Parties Registration Commission (PPRC) has had some success in building inter-party cooperation through the All Political Parties Women's Association

(APPWA), All Political Parties Youth Association (APPYA), and new All Political Parties Association (APPA). These efforts have been aided by support provided by the Peacebuilding Fund. Nonetheless, there remains a need to move away from regional or partisan affiliation towards a political discourse focusing more on policy proposals and delivering strong governance. In this context, President Koroma's initiative to convene regular informal meetings between the leadership of the political parties was welcomed by relevant stakeholders, especially given the ongoing constitutional review process and range of national issues that require continued inter-party dialogue. The PPRC expressed gratitude for the strong support provided by UNIPSIL in recent years, noted that it continues to require assistance for capacity building, and expressed its intention to expand its local presence throughout Sierra Leone.

13. The National Electoral Commission (NEC) welcomed the support provided during recent years by the United Nations, including the Peacebuilding Commission and Peacebuilding Fund. NEC is using the period before the next elections in 2017 to implement a new strategic plan and prioritize public engagement in the electoral process. NEC perceives the need to continue building a more peaceful political culture around elections, especially with respect to unemployed youth. In this respect, the NEC's efforts in 2012 to draw on youth as electoral workers have set a useful precedent. A nation-wide census is also scheduled for 2014, which will provide an update on demographic statistics and inform NEC's efforts to demarcate new boundaries for Parliamentary ridings and local council wards. Given the inevitable political sensitivities around it will be particularly important that the data is credible. Likewise, NEC is cooperating with a wider civic registration process that will produce a new National ID card. These cards will need to be synchronized with the current Voter ID cards. Finally, the NEC is creating an institute to educate electoral workers and the first graduates have now received their diplomas from University of Makeni. There may be some potential to link with Liberia and expand the program into the sub-region.

14. While the national political scene remains relatively calm, there is latent potential for conflict at the communal level, particularly in rural areas and around issues associated with the natural resource sector. The UNCT is preparing to address conflict prevention by mitigating these challenges through support for dialogue on sensitive issues, by strengthening early warning and response systems based on existing local structures, developing mechanisms for engaging youth at risk and by adopting an overall area-based approach to address key concerns. . The PBC and PBF will be called upon to build on ongoing strategic government efforts that contribute to promoting geographic peace consolidation.

Constitutional Review

15. Sierra Leone has adopted four different constitutions over the past hundred years. The latest, dating from 1991, emphasizes political procedures and is relatively weak in the areas of human rights, gender and women's rights, land tenure, natural resources, citizenship, and local governance. The Constitutional Review Committee (CRC) has developed a strategy based on extensive nation-wide consultations with the public and is

aiming to deliver a more easily understood constitution that speaks directly to Sierra Leoneans' needs. While most Members of the CRC and other national stakeholders expressed satisfaction with the approach adopted so far, several noted that the slow disbursement of funds has delayed the initial deliberations and consultations. All interlocutors stressed the importance of the constitutional review as a historic moment to address the root causes of the conflict, consolidate Sierra Leone's progress towards a peaceful and prosperous democracy, and further entrench respect for human rights. Supported by UNIPSIL and UNDP, through the PBF, the process will produce a draft for consideration by the public in a national referendum scheduled to take place in 2015. Given the fundamental and sensitive issues at stake, the political nature of the process will need to be carefully managed throughout.

Governance and Rule of Law

16. The Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) is working on a new national corruption strategy and developing a "risk-based approach" that will augment an existing focus on institutions. The strategy has been developed partly through consultations and will include a significant civic education component. The Commission's work analyzing national systems also continues, which should lead to an improvement in revenue generation, stricter internal controls, and greater limitations to the flow of financial resources through ministries. The ACC has undertaken systems reviews in several ministries and each ministry now has an Integrity Management Committee dedicated to identifying and eliminating corrupt practices. However, the ACC also faces a number of challenges. While it has handled a greater number of prosecutions than in previous years, it has also lost a significant number of cases before the courts, with many seemingly thrown out on technical grounds or at an early stage of the proceedings. In response, the ACC has been advocating for specialized courts with judges trained in specifically on anti-corruption investigations. In this respect, the ACC is also in need of adequate technical capacity to engage in more sophisticated evidence gathering, particularly with respect to forensic accounting and tracking the opportunities presented by new IT infrastructure. The ACC is aware that Government procurement remains a serious issue. Many interlocutors expressed concern about the impact of corruption at the public level, particularly with respect to the Sierra Leone Police and the delivery of basic social services. Work is also currently underway on Sierra Leone's latest Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative report, including by resolving discrepancies between the figures reported by mining companies and those produced by the Ministry of Mines. The institution also expressed the utility of development partners keeping an eye on the banking system, particularly with respect to money laundering. The ACC noted that the large portion of its funding provided by the Government may affect perceptions of its independence.

17. Several interlocutors noted that weak capacity within the judiciary is having a wider impact on public trust, perceptions of governance, and the work of independent national institutions. The Ministry of Justice is working to address these issues and improve access to justice along several fronts. Sierra Leone's criminal procedure is being revised, including by reforming rules and regulations that will streamline the trial process

and focus jury trials on the most important charges. The Legal Aid Act has also been remodeled and local courts will be in place. Taken together, these efforts should help increase the integrity of judicial processes, begin to clear the current backlog of cases, and address the issues created by lengthy pre-trial detention periods. Plans are also underway to address overcrowding in prisons. Finally, the provisions for an Independent Police Complaints Board have been approved by the President and Parliament. In order to better manage available fiscal resources, the board will convene when required. The Chair's meeting highlighted that the various initiatives underway by the Ministry may not be fully known to either national stakeholders or international stakeholders. As such, a more robust communications strategy could help to addressing current perceptions of the justice sector.

Regional Dimension

18. The Mano River Union (MRU) has established a strategy for transport and security in the sub-region, which was ratified at the Heads of State level last fall in Conakry, Guinea. The Secretariat is also in the process of establishing a Peace and Security Unit. Draft Terms of Reference have been prepared and nominations have been sought from each of the four Member States. Coordination on security issues also continues within the MRU. A recent meeting in Freetown between the MRU Chief of Defence Staffs and Heads of the Navy secured agreement on a new Memorandum of Understanding for maritime cooperation. Within the sub-region, the MRU is most concerned about tensions along the Liberia-Cote d'Ivoire border, where suspicion remains high and increased confidence building is required. The MRU continues to face serious institutional capacity constraints, but there are some indications that support for aspects of its work might be forthcoming, especially from UNDP and AfDB.

United Nations Transition

19. Sierra Leone continues to represent a good example of United Nations best practices in terms of transition and integration, as also identified by the recent UN lessons learned exercise conducted by DPA, PBSO and UNDP in January 2014. The Chair took note of the cohesiveness of the UNCT and was impressed by the speed with which it has developed a high quality draft United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) for 2015-2018. The high level of UN cooperation and integration in Sierra Leone has both facilitated the UNIPSIL transition process. However, concern was raised by the UNCT on the impact of a decreased level of international attention on Sierra Leone and its impact on any additional emerging gaps, be they financial or technical. The PBC could play a useful role by sensitizing and engaging donors in New York.

20. The impending transformation to a Resident Coordinator-led United Nations Country Team underscores the fact that Sierra Leone is on the verge of transitioning from post-conflict support to more traditional development assistance. This is positive step. However, the UNCT also stressed that Sierra Leone has very much been in the eye of the international community during its post-conflict recovery. The attention driven by its inclusion on the Security Council's agenda may now diminish following UNIPSIL's

departure. In this respect, it was noted that the political role of the ERSG, with its accompanying backing from the Security Council, has been important in recent years and is not fully replaceable. Yet it is especially important to continue supporting Sierra Leone, especially given that it faces serious development challenges in the areas of governance, health, and education. While the international partners have mobilized resources for Sierra Leone and some are increasing their funding in specific areas, much of this support is coming from bilateral donors already present in Freetown. For these reasons, interlocutors suggested that UNOWA's good offices and the Peacebuilding Commission's continued link to the wider international community are important.

Next Steps

21. The Chair discussed the recommendations of the Peacebuilding Assessment Mission report with the President, Government of Sierra Leone, other national stakeholders, the diplomatic corps, development partners, UNIPSIL, and the United Nations Country Team. While all agreed with the timing of UNIPSIL's withdrawal, a wide range of interlocutors noted the risk of international attention turning away from Sierra Leone once it leaves the Security Council's agenda. As such, it was generally felt that the Peacebuilding Commission's political accompaniment and advocacy with the wider international community, particularly in New York, would have continuing utility during the coming year in particular. Both national and international interlocutors thus saw a continuing role for the PBC to monitor developments in Sierra Leone and encourage national and international commitment to the long-term challenges of building inclusive institutions and the foundations for sustainable development. It was also agreed that it would be useful to revisit this new role after an initial period.

22. It is also clear that the transformation of the UN presence in Freetown warrants a complementary shift in the Peacebuilding Commission's engagement. As the priorities outlined in the Agenda for Prosperity indicate, Sierra Leone is committed to addressing lingering peacebuilding challenges, but within a more traditional development context. Given this evolving focus, the Peacebuilding Commission should adopt a lighter and more responsive approach. Rather than pursuing an established plan of work and conducting regular field visits, the Commission should instead move to a reactive mode of engagement based on concrete and timely requests from peacebuilding partners. On this model, the Government of Sierra Leone, United Nations Country Team, or international partners could seek assistance from the configuration in any of the areas of its mandate on an as needed basis.

23. The configuration should thus continue to serve as a source of political support. Following practice established with respect to the Agenda for Change, it would take the thematic scope of its engagement from the peacebuilding relevant provisions of the Agenda for Prosperity, notably those dealing with governance and public sector reform, gender and women's empowerment, managing natural resources, and youth employment and empowerment.

24. Adopting this lighter approach will require a few changes to established working methods. At the most basic level, the configuration will hold considerably fewer formal meetings dedicated to monitoring progress on peacebuilding priorities and addressing outstanding challenges. Instead, the Chair will maintain informal, but regular communication with relevant partners, including the Government of Sierra Leone and United Nations Resident Coordinator. Should the need arise the Chair would be prepared to respond on short notice to any requests for assistance emerging from Sierra Leone. Likewise, the Chair is prepared to travel to Sierra Leone as required, but does not necessarily envision regular and planned visits.

25. Without impacting the decision-making authority of the full configuration membership, the Chair also proposes to establish a smaller Steering Group composed of members particularly interested in developments in Sierra Leone. Although participation in the Steering Group will be open to all, the Chair expects that the composition will focus on those members that have representation in Freetown, bilateral relationships with Sierra Leone, an interest in the sub-region, or other forms of international cooperation. The Steering Group would meet semi-regularly as dictated by needs in Sierra Leone. As is the current practice in the configuration, the work of the Steering Group would be jointly managed by the Permanent Missions of Canada and Sierra Leone to the United Nations.

26. Recognizing that the proposals for the Peacebuilding Commission's future engagement in Sierra Leone are without precedent in the body's existing practice and that potential risks of conflict will continue to be closely monitored by the international community, the Chair recommends that a stock-taking exercise be undertaken in the first quarter of 2015. Much smaller in scope than the Peacebuilding Assessment Mission conducted in November 2013, this process would entail an examination of the configuration's lighter role as it has evolved over the course of the coming year. If this record demonstrates a continuing need for the Peacebuilding Commission's engagement, the stock-taking exercise would present an opportunity to make any necessary course adjustments or to further scale down the role as appropriate. If the current positive trajectory continues, the stock-taking exercise could also serve as the trigger for initiating closure of the configuration and Sierra Leone's exit from the Peacebuilding Commission's formal agenda.

27. The Chair intends to outline these recommendations in his briefing to the Security Council on March 26th and to convene a configuration meeting shortly thereafter to enable full deliberation by the membership. Pending consensus on the proposed approach, the Chair would then initiate arrangements for the Steering Group in April 2014. Given the linkages present with the Security Council's consideration of UNIPSIL's withdrawal, the Chair intends to officially convey this report to the Security Council for its attention.