

## **Visit to Liberia 12-16 May 2013**

### **Chair of the Liberia CSC of the Peacebuilding Commission**

#### **Report**

Ambassador Staffan Tillander, Chair of the PBC Liberia Country Configuration, visited Liberia on May 12-16. Mr. Brian Williams, UN PBSO, has also joined the visit for matters concerning the PBF. In preparing for and throughout the visit, close dialogue was maintained with the SRSG and her staff, in line with the role of PBC as being supportive of the efforts of UNMIL and the UN country team in their support for Liberia.

The visit was specifically focused on reconciliation, land and natural resources and issues linked to PBF financing for peacebuilding. Discussions were held with different stakeholders. Possible synergies were explored in collaboration with the UN System, the International Financial Institutions, bilateral partners and the Government of Liberia.

Meetings were held with H.E. Mr. Amara Konneh, Minister of Finance and Acting Minister of Planning and Economic Affairs, with the incoming Minister for Internal Affairs, Mr. Morris Dukuly, as well as with outgoing Minister for Internal Affairs, Mr. Blamoh Nelson. The Chair also met with civil society organizations, bilateral partners, international financial institutions, and the UN System. In addition, the Chair participated in the WIPNET Peace Hut celebration in Totota, a 10 year anniversary of women's involvement in the peace process. WIPNET activists from different parts of the country participated. The celebration was an interesting and useful illustration of the work of WIPNET and support to 26 such local groups by UNWomen.

#### **I. PBC Coordination and support to justice and security**

As argued in the report from the PBC visit to Liberia in February 2013, the Agenda for Transformation (Aft) and Liberia Development Alliance provide a framework to help maximize the coordination of key stakeholders, including the Government of Liberia, bilateral partners, private sector and civil society organizations. The Agenda for Transformation also very usefully integrates peacebuilding in a broader development context and it offers an opportunity to streamline and align behind government leadership.

There is a general wish, often expressed by Government officials, to simplify coordination structures, dialogue instruments and reporting procedures. This wish should also guide the PBC in the continued efforts to align the SMC with the Agenda for Transformation and related instruments and compacts on state- and peacebuilding priorities. Equally, the Aft offers an opportunity to become the

organizing structure for the continued PBF engagement, both for governance and programme planning (taking over for the Liberia Peacebuilding Programme).

The existing Justice and Security Joint Programme (JSJP) is a useful basis for a comprehensive approach to strengthening justice and security, and PBF-financed interventions need to be closely integrated with such broader mechanisms in order to be effective and catalytic. There is a need to make a critical appraisal of existing mechanisms, including the JSJP, to strengthen its priority setting function, making sure that measures are weighted and sequenced also among the different sectors. For this purpose, the programme is being reviewed together with the Trust Fund and other related coordination mechanisms, including the Joint Steering Committee.

The management of the Trust Fund has been an ongoing challenge during the past year. In spite of efforts to find a solution the problems have not been adequately resolved. Serious question marks remain about management and reporting. As a result, potential partners have in some cases opted not to make a contribution. Immediate measures by UNDP are needed to rectify the situation, as well as a more sustainable longterm solution within the review of the JSJP.

The UNMIL/World Bank Public Expenditure Review of the Security Sector, recently officially published but its contents well known for the past year, offers a strong input for a comprehensive approach to priority setting and sustainability. The review of the JSJP, the PBF-funded management and accountability assessment of the justice and the police and the outcome of the UNMIL Justice Workshop in the end of March, should provide a solid basis for a comprehensive strategy with benchmarks, priority setting, budgeting for recurrent costs and sustainability and an implementation plan. This would also allow for effective coordination, regular monitoring and evaluation, and resource mobilization. To get this right is essential. Building Liberian capacity to keep step with the UNMIL transition is challenging and further delays would be most unfortunate.

The discussions about the second tranche of the PBF offers a basis for continued focus on key peacebuilding priorities and the deepening of the engagement between the UN and the World Bank and the African Development Bank (AfDB). Informal discussions as well as indications from the banks about a fragility sensitive focus in their coming strategies is very welcome and efforts should be further strengthened to identify areas of possible cooperation. Informal discussions with the AfDB indicate several areas for possible further engagement. Capacity building is one such area, where the AfDB support to financial management also could benefit justice and security, including the LNP. Support to roads and energy are other areas of AfDB support that could usefully be explored. One possible area for cooperation is the AfDB support for the effective implementation of the Hub concept, through the provision of roads, water and energy systems to the Hubs' areas. Also the World Bank has expressed an interest in engaging further and the World Bank's review of public expenditures, in particular for justice and security, is an example of this. The

World Bank is also seeking additional funding from its own State and Peacebuilding Fund, providing another opportunity for coordination with the UN's PBF.

Liberia offers an arena where the 15% target for gender related funding from PBF could be reached. There are numerous examples of peace- and conflict related work that would offer opportunities for scaling up. UN Women is playing a useful catalytic role and with the strong tradition of women involvement in peace and with the very serious problems related to violence against women and girls, Liberia would seem to offer ample opportunities for engagement. This is true also in a regional context where women's groups are active across borders and linked to the Mano River Union. Indeed, as the global target is an average of 15%, Liberia could probably be considerably higher.

## **II. Reconciliation**

The process of national reconciliation still seems to be moving only slowly, although the Roadmap for National Healing and Reconciliation has been presented and could be used as a starting point for the actual implementation. Some areas are moving, such as the Liberia National History Project, with a conference organized by the Governance Commission held on May 13-16 with Government funding. Also some aspects of youth engagement and land related issues continue. However, the Road Map itself has not been finalized, and several key action areas are not moving, including the INCHR Palava Hut activities. The lack of funding seems to have remained a problem, in spite of 5 million USD being allocated in the government budget for reconciliation activities. Discussions with civil society representatives during the visit displayed a considerable frustration with the lack of progress, including as far as their involvement goes. Also, lack of clarity on coordination mechanisms, decisions on budget allocation and availability of financial means for reconciliation were concerns raised. In addition, the role of Ambassador George Weah has not been clarified.

The recently appointed Minister of Internal Affairs, Mr. Morris Dukuly, seemed intent on moving issues forward, emphasizing the importance of concrete action on the ground. While he still had to be confirmed and after that review the entire programme and the various parts of the Road Map, he clarified that his intention was to ensure the quick implementation of the Road Map, to support Ambassador Weah. He also emphasized his interest in and support to decentralization. While the Minister intended to travel extensively to different parts of the country in the coming weeks, he also seemed focused on moving reconciliation processes forward simultaneously. In terms of rapid progress on implementation, the Minister acknowledged the need for action and that Vice Minister Sirleaf together with PBO Head Wilfred Gray Johnson would be given the task of ensuring rapid and concrete action. Minister Dukuly indicated interest in participating in a VTC on this issue with the Liberia CSC in New York, possibly around mid-June.

Informal consultations among several participants, including UNMIL and the UN Country Team, had paved the way for such progress in several areas, including the Palava Huts, the community based conflict transformation, and activities related to youth, women and girls. Especially the Palava Hut mechanism should be possible to move forward towards rapid implementation without further delay.

In terms of financing, Mr. Dukuly confirmed that the 5 million USD from this year's budget, if not spent this year, would be put in a special account and made available for the next budget year. Minister Dukuly's close engagement with the President on these issues was evident. Minister Konneh confirmed that the 5 million USD would be "re-programmed" for next fiscal year and thus made available for reconciliation activities.

It continues to be important to ensure release of government funds allocated in the national budget for reconciliation activities, to clarify the role of Ambassador Weah, and to make sure there is capacity and leadership to start the reconciliation without any further delay. In addition to the History Project, other actions should start as soon as possible, while the overall coordination is maintained within the framework of the overall Road Map.

### **III. Land and natural resources**

As consistently argued in reports from several previous visits, there is a need to focus attention on land issues associated with mining, agriculture and forestry concessions, as a potential source of conflict. The PUP issue offers a dramatic example and also illustrates the importance of taking action to stop violation of laws and bringing those guilty to the courts.

A broad range of international partners are already deeply involved in various aspects of capacity building in this area, and intensified cooperation would seem useful to ensure close support to and engagement with the Government at different levels, as well as with civil society organizations.

Challenges in this area were analysed in a conference organized by civil society and with the participation of Government representatives, the African Union, the UN, bilateral partners and business. The various national policies and laws were presented, including ongoing efforts to strengthen the legal framework. The conference offered an opportunity for informal engagement among participants from civil society and government.

At the conference, the Liberian Land Commission presented ongoing efforts to formulate a land policy and design a new Land Rights Law. The importance of implementation of laws was also highlighted and the shortcoming in government capacity was pointed out as well as difficulties in living up to ambitions on local content and development. Sustained political will and resources would be necessary, but even so, full implementation would take 10-20 years. Communities'

concerns were explained, overlapping and contradictory land claims and conflicts between local interests and concessions were pointed out and the problem in dealing – or not - with already issued concessions was discussed. A reform of the survey profession, improving the deeds process and better mapping of land rights were some examples of necessary measures. A representative from the National Oil Company of Liberia (NOCAL) informed about the National Petroleum Policy, explaining that potentially huge revenues also carried huge risks in terms of corruption, inequality and damage to the environment. Adherence to the Liberian EITI principles and a policy aimed at avoiding those risks would be important to ensure benefits to the entire population. The extent to which civil society had been involved in the consultation process, and at what stage, was also discussed.

The regional and international dimensions were explained by the African Union, describing the various African instruments for good governance, transparency, anti-corruption and intensified cooperation through regional and subregional organizations.

PBC will continue to follow issues linked to land, resources and conflicts and the opportunities they offer as well as the risks to the peacebuilding process in the country. The PBC should be open to further actions and support in this critical area. Using the PBF to promote further cooperation among partners would also be useful and could be instrumental in enabling action and support. This is particularly true for intensification of cooperation among the UN, the World Bank and the African Development Bank.

#### **IV. PBC member states in Liberia**

At a previous meeting of the PBC Liberia Configuration, it was suggested that in connection with the Chair's next visit to Liberia a forum will be convened, inviting representatives from the Embassies present in or accredited to Liberia.

An informal breakfast meeting was held with PBC member states with representation in Liberia. The breakfast was well attended and offered an opportunity for presentation of the work of UNMIL and the UN in Liberia, the role of PBC, the purposes of the present visit and the focus on land and reconciliation, and the plans for the second tranche of PBF. The discussion offered an opportunity for a frank exchange of views. One representative emphasized the need for close collaboration between UNMIL and the UN Country Team and NGOs to ensure that various community activities can continue as UNMIL withdraws. Another representative pointed to the challenges linked to justice and security and the need to ensure presence in various parts of the country. Implementation was key, and there was a need to establish benchmarks and actions for the next several years. Land, natural resources and problems linked with revenues, corruption and economic development was raised, and linked to the sustainability of government efforts in capacity building. The World Bank/UNMIL Public Expenditure Review for

the security sector was mentioned as valuable basis for focusing on key actions and linking this to revenues and sustainability.

Follow up may consist of a similar meeting during the next visit, perhaps then focused on a specific issue. Briefings by UNMIL on specific issues would be another option.

## **V. Issues for Follow up**

Intensify efforts to support capacity building and reform in justice and security, including New York level dialogue aimed at ensuring effective UN engagement from all involved actors. This will contribute to building Liberian capacity to keep step with the UNMIL transition.

The PBC, PBF and other actors working on peacebuilding should align themselves with the Agenda for Transformation. Efforts to simplify coordination and avoid duplication should continue and separate or parallel reporting or coordination procedures avoided.

Continue to encourage further engagement among UN, the IFI:s and bilateral partners on peacebuilding.

Support to gender related work. Liberia offers an arena where the 15% target for gender related funding from PBF could be reached and passed.

Reconciliation – encourage action to implement some of the key areas, such as the Palava Hut mechanism. Availability of funds, including the 5 million USD and next year's allocation. VTC to be held with Minister Dukuly possibly around mid-June.

Land, resources and links to peacebuilding. Explore further actions to promote cooperation among partners.

Continue informal PBC interaction among member states in Liberia. Another informal PBC meeting during the next visit is one possibility. Briefings by UNMIL on specific issues another option.