

**Visit of H.E. Staffan Tillander, Chair of the PBC Liberia Country Configuration  
to Liberia  
15-20 September 2013**

**Mission Report**

H.E. Ambassador Staffan Tillander, Chair of the PBC Liberia Country Configuration, visited Liberia from 15 to 20 September 2013 to continue to identify ways to accelerate the peace building process in the context of UNMIL transition and participate in the Security Sector Reform Workshop organized by the Government of Liberia, the Swedish Embassy, and UNMIL. During his visit, the Chair also discussed the status of implementation of the Roadmap for National Healing and Reconciliation, with a focus on land-related conflicts, the Palava Hut Process, and the gender aspects of the overall process, among other relevant issues. The Chair wishes to thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General in Liberia, Ms. Karin Landgren and UNMIL for the support provided to his visit. The Chair was accompanied by Bautista Logioco, Programme Officer at the UN's Peacebuilding Support Office (PBSO).

Meetings were held with H.E. Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, President of Liberia, H.E. Amara Konneh, Minister of Finance, H.E. Cllr. Christiana Tah, Minister of Justice, H.E. Morris Dukuly, Minister for Internal Affairs, H.E. Julia Duncan- Cassell, Minister of Gender and Development, officials from the Land Commission, among other authorities. The Chair also met with civil society organizations, bilateral partners, international financial institutions, and the UN System, in particular UNMIL and UNDP leadership in the country.

Ten years after the signing of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement, Liberia finds itself in a challenging position. Many aspects of the peacebuilding process in the country have moved forward. Some others though, have not advanced at the pace required by a complex post-conflict context. It is now time to consolidate and build on the results achieved so far and accelerate the peacebuilding process, particularly concerning efforts in the justice and security sector as well as in the reconciliation process, including conflict sensitive management of land and natural resources.

At a meeting with H.E. Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, the President of Liberia confirmed Government's commitment to accelerate the peace building process in the country. The President also confirmed the determination to speedily implement all aspects of National Reconciliation, including the Palava Hut process, and to resolutely deal with corruption and ensure a sound management of land and natural resources. The President, as well as the Minister of Finance, assured that this coming fiscal year, efforts would be made to ensure sufficient allocation of resources for justice and security. The Minister of Finance reference to the introduction of a supplemental budget for this purpose should be closely followed and assessed.

## **I. Justice and Security**

The SSR Retreat demonstrated that there is a broad recognition that as UNMIL drawdown proceeds, the ability of the security institutions to keep pace with the transition pace is critical. While there is a need to quickly move forward with the reform and strengthening of the justice and security sectors, there is also a need to address the internal management and accountability mechanisms and ensure their effective implementation. Government commitment on reform and allocation and release of resources would be key, as well as ensuring that mechanism for cooperation and financing from partners were working effectively and efficiently. In order to accelerate the strengthening of the justice and security sector in the next few years, international support will be needed. For that support to materialize there is a need to ensure government commitment as well as to quickly review the current Justice and Security Joint Programme and Trust Fund so that international partners can rely on a focused and prioritized action plan and an effective mechanism for channeling funds into the sector.

The retreat also recognized the need to build stronger links between the justice and security actors and the Legislature, particularly concerning the Legislature's oversight role.

At the retreat, land-related disputes, border security, youth unemployment, certain ethnic tensions, terrorism and drugs trafficking, were identified as some of the main threats to security in the country.

With regard to other relevant aspects of the justice and security sector, the Minister of Gender and Development informed that the Government has set up Sexual and Gender Based Violence (SGBV) observatories in certain parts of the country. The set up of these conservatories with youth, women and men, is a positive step forward in the prevention of sexual and gender based violence.

The announcement made by the Minister of Finance at the SSR Retreat, of the Government's contribution of 1 million USD for the second and third Regional Justice and Security Hubs is very much welcomed. It is a clear demonstration of the Government's commitment to the successful implementation of the justice and security hubs concept with its focus on enhanced delivery of justice and security services throughout Liberia, and will, when released, trigger a reallocation of PBF resources, increasing the amount for hubs 2 and 3 by the same amount (1 million USD). This Government funding is in addition to the ensured recurrent costs covered by the Government and adds to the more than 13.5 million USD allocated by the PBF for the establishment of the five hubs.

With regard to the Gbarnga Justice and Security Hub, launched last February, it is encouraging to see progress in the provision of services, and the completion of the first Hub should now be vigorously pursued. At present, the deployment rate is at

83%, which should be higher at this stage. Importantly, the services being provided by the Hub are increasingly reaching beneficiaries in the region. Services range from those provided by security agencies such as the Liberia National Police/Police Support Unit (PSU) and the Bureau for Immigration and Naturalization/Border Patrol Unit (BPU) to services provided through the County Attorney's and Public Defense Offices in Bong, Lofa and Nimba. In this context, for instance, the Sexual and Gender Based Violence Crime Unit at the Hub, prosecuted seven sexual violence cases during the February and May terms of Courts in their respective circuit courts (Lofa (2 cases), Bong (4 cases) and Nimba (1 case)). In Lofa and Bong counties, all offenders were convicted of their crimes and received sentences between two years and lifetime, depending on the severity of the crime. The case in Nimba county was lost due to lack of sufficient evidence.

At the same time, efforts from different stakeholders, particularly UNOPS, should ensure that the finalization of the Courthouse building does not experience any further delays so it can become operational before the end of 2013. While this is a considerable additional delay, and not in line with repeated assurances from UNOPS and others, it should be noted that services have continued to be provided throughout from the existing court house in Gbarnga town.

It is encouraging to see that lessons learned from the Gbarnga hub, led those working on the set up of hubs 2 and 3 to focus their planning on the actual provision of services. As a result, a phased approach, of which phase one will focus in the provision of justice and security services to the areas covered by the hubs is ready to start implementation. All actors involved in the implementation of phase I, including UNDP, must ensure that there are no unnecessary delays in the provision of these services. In different exchanges during the visit, it was conveyed to the Chair that a range of services, directly or indirectly linked to the Hubs, including those provided by the land coordination centers (LCCs) on land disputes, human rights monitoring and those related to sexual and gender based violence, were already being provided (as in the case of the LCC) or were ready to be deployed immediately (such as the human rights monitors).

Phase II of hubs 2 and 3 development will move into the infrastructure requirements, and explore the potential rehabilitation of existing buildings and establish new ones. The African Development Bank's (AfDB) new country strategy supports the development of electrical networks, sustainable energy, ICT, roads and water systems in Harper and Zwedru, where hubs 2 and 3 will be located. This is an example of how complimentary efforts of different actors converge in strengthening and expanding access to justice and security throughout the country. The importance of close collaboration with the IFIs is illustrated by AfDB's interest in exploring the potential provision of sustainable energy, such as solar panels, to hubs 2 and 3.

## **II. Reconciliation**

There is a need to increase the pace of the reconciliation process. The indication that the national budget allocation for reconciliation activities in the fiscal year 2013/2014 may be very limited is deeply concerning and it sends unclear signals about commitment towards the implementation of the reconciliation agenda.

In this context, it seems that the beginning of the Palava Hut process may experience some delays due to several added steps for thorough methodological preparations, and also as a result of some capacity limitations with the INHCR. The planning and preparation for the implementation of the Palava Hut process by the INHCR may be necessary, particularly taking into consideration the need to identify a sound and inclusive methodology for the handling of sensitive issues of guilt and forgiveness. The three year period envisaged for the full implementation of the process will start, at the end of September, with the first of a series of consultations that should lead to the development of clear guidelines for the roll out of the Palava Hut. It is of critical importance that there are no delays in the development of these guidelines as there is a need to take advantage of the dry season ahead to reach out to communities throughout the country and start implementation. Enhanced communication by the Ministry of Interior, the INHCR, UNDP and other key stakeholders, on how the process moves forward as well as the active engagement of civil society will be critical. The role and involvement of civil society remains crucial.

There is some initial funding provided by UNDP and it is expected that additional funding for reconciliation activities, including the Palava Hut process, will be included in the next PBF allocation to Liberia. This should help accelerate the implementation of the Palava Hut Process and the larger reconciliation agenda. However, strong commitment from all key actors, in particular from the Government, including with sufficient budgetary allocations, will be needed in order for this process to move forward.

The Minister of Internal Affairs informed the Chair that a meeting of elders and traditional chiefs from border communities of Liberia and Cote d'Ivoire, has been scheduled for October 2013 in Zwedru, which will count with the presence of the Presidents of both countries. This is a very positive step forward in moving reconciliation efforts forward at different levels. In addition, the Minister of Internal Affairs noted that initial discussions with ECOWAS concerning potential support for early warning in Liberia are taking place. Regional cooperation on these issues is key and should be encouraged. The Minister indicated his willingness to brief the PBC Liberia CSC on this issue at a suitable time and through VTC or in connection with a visit to New York.

### **III. Conflict-sensitive land and resources management**

The need for conflict-sensitive management of land and natural resources together with the need to continue fighting corruption remain some of the main challenges to build sustainable peace in Liberia.

The Land Commission has made considerable progress in addressing land disputes through alternative dispute resolution (ADR) as well as through the set up of Land Coordination Centers (LCC) through the country. However, the continuation of these achievements need to be ensured at the end of the Commission's mandate in 2014, possibly through the establishment of the discussed Land Agency with a broader mandate and responsibility. As such, it is of utmost importance to ensure continued support to the prevention and management of land disputes, including through the implementation of the Land Rights Policy.

During the visit, a round-table on land and natural resources management with the World Bank, the EU, USAID, UNDP, UNMIL and UN Habitat, among others, was held. There is a wide range of efforts supporting the conflict sensitive management of natural resources. Effective coordination is key to maximize the impact of all these efforts. The role of civil society is of great importance, and the need for mechanisms for dialogue was pointed out, involving local communities, private sector and government.

The Peacebuilding Priority Plan approved by the Joint Steering Committee (JSC) in Liberia, currently under assessment, identifies "Conflict-sensitive management of natural resources, including in the extractive industries sector (proposed budget: US\$ 1,000,000)", as one of the peacebuilding areas to address. This potential PBF funding is a positive step as it could contribute to strengthen coordination of efforts in this area. In this context, the Ministry of Internal Affairs (MIA) and the Land Commission (LC) in Liberia have requested World Bank assistance to undertake a study that will focus on citizens' participation in concessions. The Bank and PBSO have agreed to undertake a joint mission in early 2014 to work with key stakeholders in Liberia and identify specific recommendations for complementary implementation. These efforts should continue.

### **IV. Resource mobilization**

The Chair participated at a breakfast organized by the Government of Liberia and UNMIL, with the participation of members of diplomatic representations in Monrovia, which focused on next steps for Government resource mobilization. The breakfast was preceded and prepared through several informal exchanges with Government representatives, UNMIL, the UNCT and partners. Government lead on any resource mobilization effort was emphasized. At the breakfast there were positive indications that many partners are willing to support the justice and security sector as long as the management and funding mechanisms work

effectively and efficiently. For the sustainability of the justice and security sector, there has to be a long term sustained effort by partners, and based on Government commitment and lead.

At the breakfast, the Minister of Finance explicitly linked the New Deal to resource mobilization for the justice and security sector and announced that he would call for a roundtable with the donors to move forward on a compact, with a view to validate it before the end of December 2013, and a pledging conference in January 2014 . A well designed compact, linked with the Agenda for Transformation, offers an opportunity for the PBC to ensure that the SMC is fully aligned with Government efforts and to eliminate duplicative or overlapping structures.

While it was emphasized that a resource mobilization strategy must be developed and led by the Government, and linked to clear government commitment on reform and resources, the PBC Chair stands ready to continue working with the Government of Liberia and to complement its efforts and, in the implementation of its resource mobilization strategy, reaching out to partners in New York, Monrovia and different capitals as needed to marshal resources in support of Government efforts.

## **V. Issues for follow up**

- In order to intensify efforts to accelerate the peacebuilding process, particularly concerning the justice and security sector as well as the reconciliation process, appropriate allocations for these sectors in the national budget and an effective release of funds is critical. PBC should continue to follow developments and government action in this area.
- The SSR retreat expressed strong need for reform, to address the internal management and accountability mechanisms of the security sector and external oversight mechanisms, and ensure their effective implementation. The PBC will support efforts in this area and report on progress and obstacles.
- There was support for an immediate review of the Justice and Security Joint Programme and Trust Fund that would take into consideration relevant recommendations from recent reviews and studies. This review should aim at developing a revised set of priorities for the justice and security sector, with a greater focus on building institutional capacities and addressing accountability and integrity issues. This revised set of priorities should respond both to the medium/long term objectives but also identify the immediate needs to be addressed to move towards those objectives. The PBC should continue to follow the work in this area and support rapid progress through the UN system in Liberia.

- PBC will continue to support efforts to extend justice and security services around the country, for example through the effective implementation of the Hub concept. Further delays in the finalization of the Gbarnga hub should be avoided and the focus on the provision of services for hubs 2 and 3 maintained. Rapid implementation of services should be encouraged, which should be informed by the lessons learned retreat on the Gbarnga Hub which is scheduled to take place in October. Further, synergies with actors such as the African Development Bank, among others, should be identified.
- Accelerate the pace of implementation of the reconciliation process. Recognizing the importance of planning and preparation for the implementation of the Palava Hut by the INCHR, which should translate into a sound project document, there is a need to ensure there are no further delays in the process and that civil society is actively engaged.
- Coordination of the multiple efforts to support the conflict sensitive management of land and natural resources is key and efforts to continue strengthening it will be welcome. Close collaboration of the relevant actors in this area, including the Government of Liberia, the UN System, IFIs, bilateral partners, and civil society will be key to strengthen the sector. Partners are encouraged to continue exploring areas of concrete collaboration in this area, including the World Bank-PBF effort, to avoid duplication and, more importantly, maximize impact.
- A Government of Liberia-led resource mobilization strategy, including allocation and release of sufficient resources, would serve as a necessary basis for partners' consideration of enhanced support, as well as for possible supportive efforts of the PBC. The Chair is prepared to continue his support in marshaling resources in close coordination with the Government of Liberia, through activities in Monrovia, New York and the capitals of bilateral partners.