

**Statement by the Chair of the PBC Liberia Configuration, SC briefing on
Liberia**

9 September 2014

Madame President,

Let me begin by expressing my deepest condolences to the families and friends of all those who have perished in the Ebola outbreak. I would like to commend the concerned countries for their resilience and steadfast determination in these difficult times. I pay tribute to the many brave healthcare-workers engaged in the tireless efforts to counter this terrible disease. Let me also express appreciation for the important support provided by UNMIL, members of the UN country team, particularly WHO, and other international partners.

The PBC has an important role in raising awareness, mobilizing resources and encouraging coordinated international support for a Liberia now facing a merciless epidemic. Yesterday the PBC Organizational Committee held a meeting with Dr. David Nabarro, the Senior UN system coordinator for the Ebola Virus Disease and decided to issue a statement in support of his efforts. As Chairs of the PBC Configurations for Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone, we issued a letter already on 6 August highlighting the need for international support. On 18 August we also held a joint informal VTC-meeting with the UN at the country level, resulting in a statement stressing the need for resource mobilization and for the coordination of international efforts. At this meeting the Secretary-General of the Mano River Union, Dr Kaba, also underlined the need for closer regional coordination. The PBC should be well placed to continue facilitating a regional perspective, as well as to promote relevant links between security, humanitarian and developmental aspects of the crisis.

Madame President,

The Ebola epidemic is unprecedented. Liberia is facing an accelerated and multidimensional crisis. Humanitarian needs are rising fast. Restrictions on mobility have already had a serious impact on economic activity and economic growth is predicted to slow down significantly, putting further strain on already scarce Government finances.

In Liberia the crisis has hit at a time when growth was already declining and where fiscal constraints have started to affect funding in several areas, including for important peacebuilding priorities.

Despite significant national and international efforts, this deadly disease that transcends national borders now grows exponentially. The challenges posed by what has become the worst Ebola epidemic in history would be overwhelming for any single country to cope with alone. While it is too early to predict the actual needs in

coming months, a well-coordinated support from the international community and regional cooperation is absolutely critical.

The outbreak has generated challenges in several areas and has demonstrated that, notwithstanding the considerable progress made over the past decade, Liberia remains a fragile country in post-conflict transition. It is fragile in terms of both resources and resilience to shocks such as this. We have also witnessed incidents of unrest, the spread of fear among the population and some resistance to government intervention. It is evident that sustained international support will be needed to ensure that the important gains in development and stability can be maintained, and to ensure that Liberia continues on the path towards long-term peace and prosperity.

Madame President,

Our immediate focus should be on supporting Liberia in combating this deadly virus and coping with the humanitarian needs it has created. Short-term interventions should however not be short-sighted. To the extent possible, efforts need to connect with longer term objectives. For instance, short-term health interventions should link up with longer-term strengthening of the health sector.

Furthermore, a comprehensive approach, addressing the broad array of challenges, will be needed. Government efforts to ensure the rule of law and the protection of civilians, as well as effective public communication and other confidence building measures to prevent further social unrest, should be encouraged and supported. Another time critical example, highlighted in the report from my visit to Liberia in early July, is the urgent need of resourcing and addressing the immediate capability and mobility gaps of the Liberia National Police. Continued strong international presence on the ground, including by UNMIL will be important for all these efforts, as well as the provision of adequate, rapid and flexible resources.

Madame President,

When opportunities again arise and resources are at hand, peacebuilding efforts should continue. While there may well be need for some adjustments to the agreed peacebuilding program, national reconciliation processes and the further strengthening of national institutions, including the police, justice and security sectors, will likely remain key priorities. The decentralization of services and land reform, as well as the accountable and transparent management of natural resources, are also fundamental to long-term peace and stability in the country. As we continue to support these peacebuilding efforts in Liberia, important lessons should be drawn from the current crisis, including with a view to further strengthen resilience and state-society relations.

Considering the negative impact of the crisis on the Liberian economy, joint efforts will also be needed to stimulate future growth and development. The admission of Liberia to the World Trade Organization could be important in this regard. While the Liberian Government will need to provide national resources for longer-term peacebuilding priorities, continued strong support by international partners in this area will be even more essential during the period of recovery from the deep crisis Liberia is now facing. Continuation of work by the Government of Liberia on a New Deal compact could promote streamlined and simplified donor frameworks for accountability and effectiveness of future support. The PBSO stands ready to flexibly reorient the allocation of funds from the PBF, should this be needed.

Thank you.