

Statement by the Chair of the Peacebuilding Commission Liberia Configuration to the Security Council

19 April 2018

Mr. President,

Thank you for the invitation to brief the Security Council on behalf of the Peacebuilding Commission.

This is indeed an historic moment - the final Security Council meeting on Liberia and UNMIL.

The Security Council has accompanied Liberia through the painful years of civil war; through the challenging years of peacebuilding that followed; through the trying times of the Ebola pandemic. And now, finally, transition. With successive mandates to Observer Missions and Peacekeeping Operations, Sanctions Regimes, Panels of Experts, resolutions and statements - this body has remained committed to a peaceful Liberia.

On 27 May 2010, at the request of the Liberian Government, Liberia was placed on the agenda of the Peacebuilding Commission. Since then, the PBC has been engaging in building peace in Liberia. Ambassador Skoog, as chair of the configuration, visited Liberia from 21 to 25 March. He did so in order to engage with the new government and a wide range of stakeholders. His aim was to identify peacebuilding priorities beyond the peacekeeping presence and to discuss future engagement of the PBC in Liberia.

The Commission played a key role in supporting the work of the Government and UNMIL in the development of the Peacebuilding Plan requested in Resolution 2333 of 2016. The Statements of Mutual Commitment between the Government and the Peacebuilding Commission has been a key mechanism in the PBC's engagement with Liberia. The peacebuilding priority areas identified in the last Statement of mutual commitments are: security sector development; strengthening the rule of law; promoting national reconciliation; and peaceful and inclusive elections in 2017. This statement as well as the peacebuilding plan will now form part of the basis for the new government's National Development Plan.

Mr. President,

Over the almost 15 years of its successful mission, the United Nations peacekeeping in Liberia, UNMIL has been at the forefront of efforts to lay the critical foundation for peace in Liberia. It has disarmed more than 100,000 combatants, and protected millions of civilians; assisted in rebuilding the police, the justice and security institutions; facilitated the provision of humanitarian aid; and supported the development of national capacity to promote and protect human rights.

UNMIL's mission did not come without a cost, and we shall never forget the 202 peacekeepers who lost their lives in the service of peace during the nearly 15 years the Mission was deployed in Liberia.

UNMIL has benefited from a series of excellent Special Representatives of the Secretary-General. The PBC Chair would like to commend, in particular, Special Representative, Farid Zarif, Deputy Special Representative for Rule of Law, Waldemar Vrey, and Deputy Special Representative/Resident Coordinator, Yacoub El Hillo. Their engagement and strong commitment has been crucial to bringing the mission to a successful conclusion, in partnership with the Government of Liberia.

After today, Liberia will no longer be on the Security Council agenda and the UN Peacekeeping Mission will have ended its operations. The PBC and the UN are however still very much involved in supporting Liberia in this new chapter. Regarding the transition from UNMIL to a United Nations presence, the Commission has consistently recommended the continuation of the good offices role and political accompaniment of the United Nations, as well as the provision of the expertise needed for political analysis and the implementation of the peacebuilding plan after the closure of UNMIL. The SRSG's good office's; President Obasanjo's mediation efforts and other efforts by the EU, AU, ECOWAS and broader international community were crucial in the recent election. It is strongly recommended that the good offices function be preserved during a period of heightened risk of tension in Liberia's ongoing transition.

Mr. President,

Delivering on the promise of sustainable development is essential to building resilience, successfully completing transitions and reducing the risk of violent conflict or return to conflict. Allow me to briefly outline some of the key challenges, where support from the international community will be needed, as we move forward.

We cannot ignore the fact that several of the root causes of the conflict in Liberia remain. Addressing decentralization and land issues, as well as ensuring greater access to justice and increased capacity in the security and justice sectors, are crucial for continued consolidation of peace. They must be addressed in the new government's National Development Plan. The need to strengthen the rule of law and reconciliation is crucial. In addition, legislation on violence against women is also still outstanding.

Mr. President,

It remains imperative for the PBC to continue pushing for renewed and sustained political leadership regarding key structural reforms, as set out in phase I of the Peacebuilding Plan. Progressing such reforms will help address some of the root causes of conflict in Liberia. Greater integration of the UN's sustaining peace efforts is critical in this regard. This includes ensuring that sustaining peace is solidly reflected in the UNDAF, and that all parts of the UN system on the ground are supporting the national development plan in an effective and coordinated way. The PBC has an important role to play in encouraging this and in working with all parts of the UN system to make sure this happens.

It is clear that concrete progress regarding reforms is also dependent on economic growth and financial capabilities. The difficult economic situation is having a continued negative impact on the population. Nonetheless, the government is clear that they have the political will and the energy needed. To illustrate this, the President has lowered his salary by 25%.

When President Weah met with Ambassador Skoog, he assured him that Liberia had an enthusiastic and energetic new government committed to ensuring the best future for the people of Liberia. The president, however, stressed that the new government would need the continued support of the

international community. He stressed the importance of partnerships in this regard. The PBC will continue to work closely with the World Bank and other international financial institutions in this regard and also encourage greater private sector engagement.

The Liberia Multi Partner Trust Fund, with predictable funding from international partners in combination with the peacekeeping fund's catalytic support, has the potential to be an effective mechanism to enable continued implementation of the country's peace building priorities.

Mr. President, to conclude,

The Peacebuilding Commission will continue its political accompaniment and support continued international attention. The Peace Building Commission will work alongside the Resident Coordinator and UN Country Team to support the government's work towards sustainable development through the development of Liberia's National Development Plan. The Peacebuilding Commission will also discuss a framework of engagement as an option to ensure mutual accountability between the Government, the UN and the Peacebuilding Commission, including on the important outstanding priorities in the Liberia peacebuilding plan.

I thank you.