

Peacebuilding Commission
Steering Group of the Liberian Country Specific Configuration

Chairperson's Summary

Background

1. Since the last update in April 2011, Nigeria and the Ukraine have become active in the steering group joining China, European Union, Ghana, Ireland, Japan, Liberia, Sweden, United Kingdom and the United States. The group has met on an informal basis six (6) times in the last few months: 29 April, 5 May, 17 May, 3 June, 7 June and 12 July. The meetings have discussed a range of topics that have enabled members to contribute to the finalization of the Liberia Peacebuilding Programme (LPP), monitor peacebuilding activities in the country as well as gain greater insights into the issues.

Discussions in and Conclusions of the Steering Group

2. The Liberian Mission invited members of the steering group to a briefing on 29 April with the Executive Director of the Peacebuilding Office / Peacebuilding Fund Secretariat in the Liberian Ministry of Internal Affairs, Mr. Wilfred Gray-Johnson. Mr. Gray-Johnson briefed members on the development of the LPP noting how the planning processes within the Government for the next Poverty Reduction Strategy has informed the LPP. In response to questions on sequencing and prioritization, he explained the role of the Technical Advisory Groups (TAGs) which are an inclusive coordination body at the senior technical level that are tasked to delve into the details associated with the implementation of the LPP. He gave an update on the Hub, clarifying that while construction has been started the "soft component" of the project was still being elaborated.
3. On the 5 May, the steering group, via video-tel conferencing (VTC), represented the Liberia Configuration in the Joint Steering Committee (JSC) meeting. Prior to the consideration of the LPP, UNDP and UNOPS briefed on the status of the Regional Justice and Security Hub. Members of the steering group inquired about command and control, deployment plans, budget and timelines. Key actors responded that many of these elements were still in the process of being finalized. Agreement was reached that the Hub would become operational in phases with the first deployment of staff being in August and gradually increasing as more structures were finalized. The LPP was then put before the JSC and the PBC for endorsement. The Chairperson of the Liberia Configuration with reference to comments forwarded electronically on the previous draft of the document, commended the improved text that focused on the three peacebuilding priorities contained in the Statement of Mutual Commitments (SMC). He recognized that PBC's comments had been incorporated in large part in particular on national reconciliation and the budget. At the same time, the Chairperson advocated for a clearer role for the PBC and cautioned against establishing the land compensation scheme, which can create insatiable demands. Other members equally commented on the improved document advising for it to remain a flexible document that would be able

to adapt to any changes that may occur such as an escalation in the crisis in Cote d'Ivoire. Before adopting the LPP, it was agreed that the LPP will be reviewed within nine months and for the PBC to participate in the JSC meetings as well as removing from the document reference to a statement for the JSC to provide the "overall vision". The DSRSG then outlined the next steps including: carrying out baseline surveys; submitting the LPP to PBSO; sequencing of priorities within the TAGs; determination of what funding can be obtained via the Justice and Security Trust Fund and bi-lateral donors on the ground; development of terms of references for posts included in the LPP; submission of monthly and quarterly reports on implementation of the LPP; and reinforcement of the Peacebuilding Office.

4. Following the JSC meeting, the steering group met to discuss the upcoming Configuration meeting, fundraising and the next trip to Liberia. The following agenda items were agreed upon for the next meeting of the Configuration: endorsement of the LPP, fundraising and the first review of the SMC. On fundraising the steering group decided to wait for the field to advise on the sequencing of priorities as well as to obtain details on what projects might be funded via other sources namely the PBF, Justice and Security Trust Fund and bi-lateral donors. In view of the holding of the International Dialogue on Statebuilding and Peacebuilding, it was agreed to organize the next PBC Delegation trip around this meeting 12 - 17 June. PBSO was tasked to prepare a draft agenda for consideration.
5. In coordination with the Swedish Mission, the Chairperson convened a meeting on the 17 May at which Ms. Katja Swensoon, the Security Sector Reform Coordinator for the Swedish Embassy in Monrovia and the Chair of the Security and Justice Donor Coordination Group briefed the steering group. Ms. Swensoon provided an overview of three donor coordination mechanisms in Liberia focused on justice and security issues: Justice and Security Trust Fund, Justice and Security Coordination Group, and the JSC. She explained how these are aligned with Government planning mechanisms, in particular the National Visioning Exercise that is in the process of being developed. She encouraged the PBC to consider supporting this exercise which at the moment was solely a national process that would be seeking to engage the international community in the fall of 2011. The members also discussed with Ms. Swensoon how and if there would be an added value to evaluating the first Hub within months of its completion and before the construction of the second one started. It was agreed that it would be advantageous to push for a baseline study at this point as many felt that changing individual's perceptions on justice and security is a long-term objective and thus it would be difficult to assess the added value of the Hub in the immediate future. Ms. Swensoon also shared insights on preparations for the elections and security costs associated with the Ivorian conflict including the humanitarian response.
6. On 1 June, the steering group via VTC participated in a Justice and Security TAG meeting, which was also attended by the PBF Advisory Group that was on mission in Liberia at the time. Subsequent to an overview provided by the Peacebuilding Office on the

development of terms of reference for the posts (Hub Manager and Justice and Security Programme Manager) included in the LPP, participants debated whether the posts should be international or national leaning towards the former. Possibilities for funding via the Quick Start Project and the LPP were also clarified noting that the JSC had the necessary authority on this. As follow-up to the JSC, UNMIL shared a proposal for sequencing of activities; no major comments were made neither was a decision taken on the proposal. UNOPS then updated participants on the status of the construction of the Hub drawing attention to an increase in the budget, primarily related to the decision to build new courts in the Hub rather than rehabilitate existing ones in the town center and the unforeseen need to level the land. The PBC Chair on behalf of the steering group urged participants to make the necessary decisions to ensure continuous progress.

7. On 7 June, Mr. Dan Smith the Chair of the PBF Advisory Group via VTC briefed the steering group on the Advisory Group's recent mission to Liberia. He began by outlining the mission had meetings with a range of actors including the Government, UN and civil society. The Group found that there was clear consensus on the challenges facing the country including: insecurity, youth, land, Cote d'Ivoire crisis, security sector reform, government capacity, and economy. The LPP was described as a solid document. However, the Group was concerned that while there is clarity on the way forward in the justice and security sectors, reconciliation lacked a clear direction. The Hub project, in particular, was assessed as holding great potential but also seen as a risky project that could negatively impact security sector as a whole if it fails. On this matter, it was emphasized that the "soft component" of the project, more specifically the community outreach, was critical and needed immediate attention as this component was not keeping pace with the construction of the site and the future deployment of security officers. The importance of UN leadership and the engagement of UNMIL in the implementation of the LPP was also underscored as essential to the success of the programme. The members of the steering group, many of whom would be participating in the upcoming PBC Delegation mission, supported the points raised emphasizing the importance of advancing the reconciliation agenda and gaining community ownership for the Hub. Members of the mission agreed to further reflect on these points during their trip.
8. On 12 July, Dr. Amos Sawyer, the Chairperson of the Liberian Good Governance Commission (GGC) via VTC met with the steering group. The PBC Chair, highlighting the President's recent endorsement for the preparation of a national strategy for reconciliation during the PBC's recent mission, opened the meeting with reference to the importance of a common historical narrative within a national reconciliation process and called upon Dr. Sawyer to share his views on how to advance reconciliation agenda in Liberia. Dr. Sawyer began with reference to the generally held assumption that if the economy is put on track this will indirectly facilitate reconciliation. He opined that while this has some merit, it does not supersede the need for a clear policy and strategy on reconciliation. With reference to a past proposal of the GGC to hold a

national conference, he commented that this may still be a way forward but that it will need to wait till after the elections. At the same time, he outlined how the National Visioning Exercise also provided a venue through which work on reconciliation can begin as this Exercise will look at national identity, historical narratives, marginalization, exclusion etc. Out of the discourse on a national vision, key points for a reconciliation policy can be pulled. He further elaborated on the plan for the National Visioning Exercise noting that baseline studies are currently being compiled and which will be used to engage society post the elections. Dr. Sawyer clarified that the GGC views reconciliation broadly and as an issue that needs to be mainstreamed through public policy concretely addressing exclusion, marginalization, and inequality. On the issue of historical narrative, he offered that history does not need to be revised instead the focus on the settlers' past needs to be complemented by the history of the indigenous populations revealing how these populations collaborated in the past. He added that the narrative needs to go beyond the myths and wars documenting events that will allow all Liberians to feel part of the larger Liberia mosaic.

9. In response to a question on the need for a national conference in the near future rather than building a national archive, Dr. Sawyer added that the on-going baseline studies were scholarly research projects being carried out by Liberians both in Liberia and abroad. The products of this research would provide a basis on which to engage the population and from which one will be able to ascertain what kind of conference should be held. Commissioner Mulbah further added that a secretariat will be established for the process and will also involve radio talk talks to engage the public. Dr. Sawyer is optimistic that consensus can be reach among the population with the proper approach. In providing requested updates on the status of decentralization he noted that some obstacles prevented the inclusion of two issues related to elections of senators and their terms to be included in the upcoming referendum. He further acknowledged that the Independent National Commission for Human Rights, Ministry of Education, and other actors had key roles in carrying out some of the recommendations of the Truth and Reconciliation Report and in developing a policy and strategy on national reconciliation. He said that the National Visioning Exercise could energize the process and produce the necessary framework and that the GGC could also be the coordinating body. Throughout the conversation, Dr. Sawyer maintained that while some aspect need to wait till the holding of the elections, he felt that any possible future administration would support the process noting that the process will need to be inclusive and driven forward by the Government and other national actors.
10. Following the meeting with the GGC, the steering group met to discuss the following issues: mission report, contact with the Security Council, fundraising, the PBF allocation and the land compensation scheme. All members of the mission Delegation affirmed that they had received and commented on the report, which could now be considered final. It was also concluded that the letter would be transmitted to the Security Council with a detailed cover letter from the Chair. The Chair briefed on his contact with the

Norwegian Government, which showed keen interest in supporting the Hubs and national reconciliation. Once figures are available the Chair will discuss in more detail with the Norwegians. The Liberian Ambassador also noted that the Australians had informed her at the African Union Summit of their interest in increasing their support to Liberia as per past conversations with the Chair. It was clarified that the Australians had given \$1 Million to the Justice and Security Trust Fund and were still open to considering additional support.

11. The Assistant Secretary-General for Peacebuilding shared the contents of a draft PBSO letter to be sent to the Government and UN informing of a first contribution from the PBF for \$20.8 Million. This funding was allocated in a manner that should assist the PBC in its fundraising efforts as the PBF will cover the full costs for the 1st Hub and 50% for the remaining Hubs with necessary flexibility for PBC resource mobilization. On the matter of the land compensation scheme, steering group members expressed concern about the feasibility and sustainability of this scheme as well as being attentive to the political dimensions in view that the election campaign had been started. It was agreed that it would be best for the Government to raise the first 50% of the funding sought proceed with disbursement allowing the PBC to assess the viability of this scheme.

20 July 2011