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5. The situation in Sierra Leone

Overview

During the period under review, the Council held nine meetings and adopted two resolutions and three presidential statements in connection with the situation in Sierra Leone. It received four briefings by the Executive Representative of the Secretary-General for Sierra Leone and head of the United Nations Integrated Peacebuilding Office in Sierra Leone (UNIPSIL) and Chairperson of the Sierra Leone country-specific configuration of the Peacebuilding Commission. The President and the Prosecutor of the Special Court for Sierra Leone also briefed the Council on the final stages of the work of the Special Court.

During the meetings, the Council discussed the preparations for the presidential, parliamentary and local elections of 17 November 2012. The Council also discussed the political and security situation as well as the peacebuilding support activities in Sierra Leone. The mandate of UNIPSIL¹ was extended twice for periods of one year respectively, with the final extension until 31 March 2014.²

In May 2012, the Council visited Sierra Leone among other countries during the Security Council mission to West Africa.³

¹ For more information on the mandate of UNIPSIL, see part X, sect. II, with regard to political missions.

² Resolutions [2065 \(2012\)](#) and [2097 \(2013\)](#).

³ For more information on the Security Council mission to West Africa, see the present part, sect. 34, in regard to Security Council missions.

The table at the end of the section lists the meetings at which this item was considered, and gives information on, inter alia, invitees, speakers and decisions adopted.

Briefings and the presidential statements on the presidential, parliamentary and local elections

On 22 March 2012, the Executive Representative of the Secretary-General and head of UNIPSIL briefed the Council on the developments in the country and stressed that in order to consolidate the “exceptional successes” that Sierra Leone had made since its civil war, it was crucial that the international community and the Security Council continued its support and vigilance, focusing in particular on the presidential, parliamentary and local council elections scheduled to take place on 17 November 2012. On the preparation for the elections, he emphasized the importance of dialogue between the Government and opposition parties and in that regard, he encouraged senior politicians to meet and openly discuss controversial issues and strive to create an atmosphere in which the elections were fair and the citizens were able to freely make their own choices without fear of retribution. He also underlined the need to implement the joint communiqué signed between the two main political parties on 2 April 2009, which included the establishment of an independent police complaints commission and support by all political parties of the country’s electoral management bodies. Commending the work of the All Political Parties Youth Association and All Political Parties Women’s Association, he emphasized the role of cross-party initiatives in preventing violence from arising and raising awareness for a stronger role of women in politics.⁴

Drawing on the findings of his visit to Sierra Leone in January 2012, the Chair of the Sierra Leone configuration of the Peacebuilding Commission focused in his briefing on the upcoming elections, regional challenges to peacebuilding, and the transition process in the country. While acknowledging that the technical and financial preparations

⁴ [S/PV.6739](#), pp. 2-5.

for the elections were on schedule, he underlined that there was a need to foster more open dialogue with political parties and the national electoral institutions. In that context, he encouraged political leaders to demonstrate their commitment to free, fair and peaceful political competition and urged political parties to implement the joint communiqué of 2009. He added that the creation of an enabling and favourable political environment should be the immediate priority of UNIPSIL. He added that the Security Council had recently focused on transnational threats to peace and security but that more was needed. In this regard, he highlighted the potential for action by the Economic Commission for West Africa with the continued strong support from the Council.⁵

The Minister for Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of Sierra Leone, in his statement, highlighted his Government's commitment to the peacebuilding process as well as to transparent elections by enhancing political dialogue and collective commitment to peaceful, free, fair, transparent and credible elections. He also stressed the Government's commitment to democratic governance and the maintenance of the independence of the democratic institutions such as the National Electoral Commission, the Political Parties Registration Commission and the Independent Media Commission. In that regard, he noted that the National Electoral Commission was playing a leading role in the biometric voter registration process and the review and reform of the electoral laws.⁶

On 11 April 2012, the Council adopted a presidential statement reaffirming its support for continuing efforts to consolidate peace in Sierra Leone and calling upon all political parties to engage constructively in an honest and open dialogue and intensify their efforts to foster an environment that is conducive to the holding of peaceful, transparent, free and fair elections. In addition, the Council called on the leadership of the political parties to undertake cross-party confidence-building measures, promote political

⁵ Ibid., pp. 5-6.

⁶ Ibid., pp. 6-8.

participation and non-violence among their members and to ensure the full adherence to due process of law and to the recommendations of the 2 April 2009 joint communiqué.⁷

On 11 September 2012, in his briefing before the Council, the Executive Representative of the Secretary-General and head of UNIPSIL said that the main focus of the work of UNIPSIL was the preparations for the 17 November 2012 elections. He reported that major electoral arrangements, particularly the biometric voter registration exercise, were successfully concluded and other arrangements such as the procurement of sensitive materials were still ongoing. He added that all ten registered political parties, as well as other major stakeholders had signed a declaration on 18 May 2012, committing to free, fair and peaceful elections, and there had not been incidents of political violence since then. While welcoming the positive developments in the country, he cautioned that continued attention should be given to the following: promoting constructive dialogue and mutual trust among the main political actors; ensuring confidence in the security sector; improving communication and dialogue between the National Electoral Commission and the political parties; and managing the role of the media.⁸

The Chair of the Sierra Leone configuration of the Peacebuilding Commission in his briefing noted that the necessary logistical and financial arrangements for the elections were in place. However, he stressed that the greatest challenge was political. He reported that the Commission planned to travel to Sierra Leone in October 2012 to assess the situation and stress the need to maintain an open and inclusive political dialogue and abide by the commitments set out in the 2009 joint communiqué and the May 2012 political declaration. He also noted that the post-election period would require increased focus on several long-term and outstanding peacebuilding concerns, particularly youth unemployment, fighting corruption and transnational crime.⁹

The representative of Sierra Leone stressed that the Government would continue to demonstrate strong leadership in dealing with political violence, and that perpetrators

⁷ [S/PRST/2012/11](#).

⁸ [S/PV.6829](#), pp. 2-4.

⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 4-5.

would be brought to justice. He urged the Security Council and the United Nations, more broadly, to maintain their full support for the ongoing electoral process, as the 2012 elections were the crucial test for consolidating peace, security and democracy in Sierra Leone. He also urged the United Nations and international partners to continue to support the Special Court for Sierra Leone.¹⁰

On 12 September 2012, the Council unanimously adopted resolution [2065 \(2012\)](#), welcoming the preparations for the presidential, parliamentary and local elections on 17 November 2012 and underlining their importance as a “key benchmark” for consolidation of peace in Sierra Leone.¹¹ In this regard, the Council requested UNIPSIL to continue providing assistance to the Government of Sierra Leone and its electoral, democratic and security institutions in the preparation and conduct of the elections. Furthermore, the Council asked UNIPSIL to provide assistance to conflict-prevention and mitigation efforts, including through supporting inclusive dialogue among political parties, the Government and all relevant stakeholders.¹²

On 30 November 2012, the Council issued a presidential statement¹³ commending Sierra Leone on the conduct and successful conclusion of presidential, parliamentary, district and local elections. In its presidential statement, the Council called upon all political parties and candidates to accept the results of the elections and to work with the Government in a constructive manner, through national dialogue and reconciliation. The Council underscored the significance of these elections and the wide acceptance of the results as a key benchmark of consolidating peace in Sierra Leone. It further recalled its request for the Secretary-General to deploy an inter-agency technical assessment mission to consider detailed proposals and a recommended timeline for the transition, drawdown and exit for UNIPSIL by 15 February 2013.

¹⁰ Ibid., pp. 5-8.

¹¹ Resolution [2065 \(2012\)](#), fourth and fifth preambular paragraphs.

¹² Ibid., para. 6.

¹³ [S/PRST/2012/25](#).

Briefings and the presidential statement on the Special Court for Sierra Leone

On 9 October 2012, the President of the Special Court for Sierra Leone in her briefing highlighted activities and achievements of the Court. She made reference to an independent nationwide survey conducted in Sierra Leone and Liberia of which she highlighted data confirming that 91 per cent of people in Sierra Leone and 78 percent in Liberia believed that the Special Court had contributed to bringing peace to their countries. She gave the credit of those results to the Council and its steadfast commitment to the work of the Court and highlighted that the Court was the first United Nations-sponsored tribunal to carry out its work in the territory where serious violations of international humanitarian law were committed. She also emphasized the progressive role of the Special Court through its jurisprudence in recognising, for the first time, forced marriage as a crime against humanity and sexual violence as a form of terrorism and for developing jurisprudence on the recruitment and use of child soldiers. She underlined that the Special Court would be soon completing its final case against Mr. Charles Taylor and would be transitioning to a residual status before closing its doors. She mentioned that it would be the first international criminal tribunal to do so. In this regard, she stressed the significance of the Residual Special Court for Sierra Leone and that the support of the Council for its residual status would be essential.¹⁴

The Prosecutor of the Special Court for Sierra Leone, in her briefing, said that despite the challenges the Special Court had faced during its decade of operation, especially indictment, staffing and witness protection issues, it had played a key role in prosecuting war criminals. She also emphasized that the security of witnesses remained a significant challenge and it was critical to ensure that the Residual Special Court had sufficient financial resources to protect witnesses and those that may be put at risk by their testimony.¹⁵

The Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of Sierra Leone, in his intervention, said the Special Court had successfully delivered on its goals

¹⁴ [S/PV.6844](#), pp. 2-4.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 4-6.

and had made significant contributions to gender justice and had laid the foundations to recognize acts of forced marriage, sexual violence and the recruitment and use of child soldiers during the conflict as punishable crimes under international law. Underscoring the importance of full completion of the Special Court's mandate as well as its residual tasks, she called on the international community to continue its support and to ensure adequate financial resources.¹⁶

Speakers expressed their appreciation towards the work of the Special Court and its contribution to international criminal justice, the rule of law and maintaining peace and security in Sierra Leone as well as in the region.¹⁷ They looked forward to the completion of the work of the Special Court and to its transition to the Residual Special Court calling on the international community for continued financial support.¹⁸

At the same meeting the Council issued a presidential statement reiterating its strong support for the Special Court and commending the progress achieved.¹⁹ The Council recognized the need to address residual matters after its closure and urged the international community to continue to support the Special Court as it moved into its final stage of work.

Briefings and resolution on the transition of UNIPSIL

On 13 March 2013, the Executive Representative of the Secretary-General and head of UNIPSIL briefed the Council on the developments in the country and said that, in view of the progress in Sierra Leone and by UNIPSIL in the implementation of its mandate, it was appropriate to begin a reconfiguration of UNIPSIL and to gradually transfer responsibilities to the United Nations country team and the Government. Meanwhile, he noted that UNIPSIL would continue to perform three key residual tasks: conflict prevention and mediation support for the constitutional review process; support

¹⁶ Ibid., pp. 6-7.

¹⁷ Ibid., p. 9 (Germany); p. 10 (Pakistan); p. 10 (Togo); p. 12 (Russian Federation); p. 12 (Columbia); and p. 16 (Guatemala).

¹⁸ Ibid., p. 9 (United Kingdom); p. 11 (Togo); and p.15 (United States).

¹⁹ [S/PRST/2012/21](#).

for security sector reform; and support the strengthening of human rights institutions. Emphasising the importance of technical and financial resources for ensuring a smooth transition, he called on the Peacebuilding Commission and international partners to continue their support.²⁰

The Chair of the Sierra Leone configuration of the Peacebuilding Commission reported that his visit to Sierra Leone in February 2013 had confirmed that while many activities of UNIPSIL could be transferred to other actors, continued dialogue and political cooperation were still needed. However, he noted that many stakeholders had stressed the importance of the assistance of UNIPSIL to the constitutional review process and the security sector. He also mentioned that the Commission would be turning its attention to supporting the transition process, including by advocating for any necessary resources required to fill the gaps created by the mission's drawdown.²¹

The Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation confirmed his Government's readiness to cooperate with the United Nations, the Peacebuilding Commission and development partners to implement a smooth and seamless transition process from UNIPSIL to the "normal United Nations Resident Coordinator system as and when necessary".²² In this regard, he said that the transition process had to be carefully managed, taking into consideration the short-term and long-term impact on the gains made so far in Sierra Leone. He also affirmed that his Government did not desire to be on the agenda of the Council indefinitely but that the circumstances were such that it saw the need to be guided by the Council in its decisions in the forthcoming future.²³

On 26 March 2013, the Council adopted resolution [2097 \(2013\)](#), extending the mandate of UNIPSIL for a final period of one year until 31 March 2014. The Council, inter alia, encouraged UNIPSIL, the Government of Sierra Leone and bilateral and multilateral partners to form a transition steering group to determine the international community's support to Sierra Leone for the transfer of residual functions after the

²⁰ [S/PV.6933](#), pp. 2-4.

²¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 4-5.

²² *Ibid.*, p. 6.

²³ *Ibid.*, pp. 5-8.

withdrawal of UNIPSIL.²⁴ The representative of Sierra Leone, speaking after the vote, expressed his country's appreciation and assured the Council of his Government's commitment towards the full implementation of the resolution.²⁵

On 18 September 2013, the Executive Representative of the Secretary-General and head of UNIPSIL briefed the Council on the developments in implementing a transition and exit plan aimed at the mission's full drawdown by 31 March 2014. He noted that UNIPSIL was making good progress and was firmly set to complete the process as scheduled. Furthermore, he added that the United Nations country team had also advanced its work in finalizing a United Nations Development Assistance Framework for the period 2015-2020. He highlighted that Sierra Leone had embarked on major undertakings such as the launching of the country's development agenda (the Agenda for Prosperity) as well as on a constitutional review exercise.²⁶

The Chair of the Sierra Leone configuration of the Peacebuilding Commission in his briefing focused on the transition of UNIPSIL, the Government of Sierra Leone's Agenda for Prosperity, and the future of the Commission's engagement. Underlining the significance of the challenges that Sierra Leone was facing during the post-conflict peacebuilding process, he stated that the drawdown of UNIPSIL should be seen as a transformation of the international support, rather than its culmination. Regarding the scaling down of the role of the Peacebuilding Commission he said that the transition strategy was being developed and the Council would be consulted early in 2014.²⁷

The Minister for Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of Sierra Leone stated that his Government supported the drawdown of UNIPSIL. He added that the review of the engagement of the Peacebuilding Commission was an indication of the improved security environment in the country. Turning to the implementation of the national development strategy (the Agenda for Prosperity), he urged the international community to continue to support the development process of the country, including by

²⁴ Resolution [2097 \(2013\)](#), paras. 1 and 4.

²⁵ [S/PV.6942](#), p. 2.

²⁶ [S/PV.7034](#), pp. 2-4.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 4-5.

promoting foreign investment and supporting the country's education and key governance institutions.²⁸

²⁸ Ibid., pp. 5-7.

Meetings: the situation in Sierra Leone

<i>Meeting and date</i>	<i>Sub-item</i>	<i>Other documents</i>	<i>Rule 37 invitations</i>	<i>Rule 39 and other invitations</i>	<i>Speakers</i>	<i>Decision and vote (for-against- abstaining)</i>
S/PV.6739 22 March 2012	Report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Integrated Peacebuilding Office in Sierra Leone (S/2012/160)		Sierra Leone (Minister for Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation)	Executive Representative of the Secretary-General for Sierra Leone and head of UNIPSIL, Chairperson of the Sierra Leone country-specific configuration of the Peacebuilding Commission	All invitees	
S/PV.6748 11 April 2012 September 2010	Report of the Secretary-General on UNIPSIL (S/2012/160)					S/PRST/2012/11
S/PV.6829 11 September 2012	Ninth report of the Secretary-General on UNIPSIL (S/2012/679)		Sierra Leone	Executive Representative of the Secretary-General for Sierra Leone, Chairperson of the Sierra Leone country-specific configuration of the Peacebuilding Commission	All invitees	
S/PV.6831 12 September March 2012	Ninth report of the Secretary-General on UNIPSIL (S/2012/679)	Draft resolution submitted by the United Kingdom (S/2012/698)	Sierra Leone		Sierra Leone	Resolution 2065 (2012) 15-0-0
S/PV.6844 9 October 2012			Sierra Leone (Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation)	President of the Special Court for Sierra Leone, Prosecutor of the Special Court for Sierra Leone	All Council members ^a and all invitees	S/PRST/2012/21
S/PV.6876 30 November 2012			Sierra Leone		Sierra Leone	S/PRST/2012/25
S/PV.6933 13 March 2013	Tenth report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Integrated Peacebuilding Office in Sierra Leone (S/2013/118)		Sierra Leone (Minister for Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation)	Executive Representative of the Secretary-General for Sierra Leone, Chairperson of the Sierra Leone country-specific configuration of the Peacebuilding Commission	All invitees	

<i>Meeting and date</i>	<i>Sub-item</i>	<i>Other documents</i>	<i>Rule 37 invitations</i>	<i>Rule 39 and other invitations</i>	<i>Speakers</i>	<i>Decision and vote (for-against- abstaining)</i>
S/PV.6942 26 March 2013	Tenth report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Integrated Peacebuilding Office in Sierra Leone (S/2013/118)	Draft resolution submitted by Australia, Luxembourg, Morocco, Rwanda, Togo and the United Kingdom (S/2013/181)	Sierra Leone		Sierra Leone	Resolution 2097 (2013) 15-0-0
S/PV.7034 18 September 2013	Eleventh report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Integrated Peacebuilding Office in Sierra Leone (S/2013/547)		Sierra Leone (Minister for Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation)	Executive Representative of the Secretary-General for Sierra Leone , Chairperson of the Sierra Leone country-specific configuration of the Peacebuilding Commission	All invitees	

^a India was represented at the ministerial level (Minister of State for External Affairs).