

**PBC Liberia Configuration Meeting with  
Cllr. Benedict Sannoh,  
Minister of Justice of Liberia, and Ms. Karin Landgren, UN Special Representative of  
the Secretary-General to Liberia on**

**5 May 2015  
(10:00 a.m., rm S-2727)**

**Chair's Summary**

1. Ambassador Olof Skoog, Chair of the Peacebuilding Commission, opened the meeting by welcoming the Minister of Justice of Liberia and SRSG Karin Landgren of UNMIL to the meeting. The Chair also expressed his appreciation to the SRSG for her support to the PBC as she would be concluding her term in the summer. He stated that the focus of the meeting would be on the Ebola recovery phase and the drawdown of UNMIL.

2. The Minister of Justice expressed appreciation for the support received from partners. He indicated that the Ebola Virus Disease (EVD) in Liberia had exposed weaknesses in governance including 1) the lack of its relations with civil society. (At the central level, the response to EVD was not as effective as it was when focus shifted to the community level, where there was synergy between the government and the community.); and 2) the lack of regional coordination and effective institutions especially along the borders regions. The Minister stated that the economic impact of the EVD was devastating as a consequence of cancelled flights; closure of concessions; decrease in government revenue; the effect on the labour force, the energy sector, health care and educational systems; among others. In this regard, a major challenge in moving forward was how to address the consequences of the Ebola crisis, including stimulating the economy and addressing institutional and structural challenges. On the issue of institutional structures along the borders, the Minister noted, for example, that of the 176 border posts between Liberia and the neighbouring countries, the Bureau of Immigration and Naturalization had presence in only 46, out of only 27 had permanent structures. The Minister emphasized that as a part of a regional coordination mechanism, institutional capacity at the borders needed to be strengthened.

3. While there were a number of other challenges ahead, the Minister underscored that the Government needed financial and technical support from partners to address them. The third phase of the UNMIL drawdown, which had been suspended because of the EVD, had just begun its implementation following the adoption of Security Council resolution 2215. The Government of Liberia was expected to assume fully its complete security responsibilities from UNMIL by 30 June 2016. The Minister stated that in light of the remaining challenges to the consolidation of peace in Liberia, the government's plan for the transition was comprehensive and holistic covering more than security issues. The plan, which had been developed with the support of UNMIL addressed key challenges. It emphasized, among other underlying benchmarks including a holistic government approach for both ownership and implementation; Efficiency, transparency, accountability, democratic and civilian oversight; Coordination, collaboration and partnerships within the security sector and between Liberia and regional and law enforcement partners; Key legal and regulatory policies and frameworks to be strengthened and established in areas where

they did not exist. The plan also identified three strategic operational approaches: a) Area-specific approach by sector agencies to fill in immediate security gaps created by the UNMIL drawdown throughout the country; 2) Paying prompt and immediate attention in response to all threat-prone-regions of the country; 3) Simultaneously pursue all normal, conventional security operations throughout the country involving all of the sector agencies; and 4) Review, improve and enact legal frameworks of the sector agencies, including passage of the Police Act, Small Arms Act, BIN Services Act, and BIN Nationality Act among others. The cost of the plan amounted to US\$104 million for the next three years.

4. For FY2015/2016, the Minister indicated that the government has identified the justice and security as one of its priority sectors. The amount for the budget year would be announced in a few months. He also assured that with proper coordination with UNMIL, the hand-over of security responsibilities from UNMIL would be achieved smoothly. An important issue, in this regard, was how to deal with perception issues. He underlined that the perception of those sectors where UNMIL maintained presence was that they were being abandoned without UNMIL's presence if the services previously provided were not continued by the Government of Liberia. The government would need to manage this perception through appropriate deployment of the police along with increased community sensitization.

5. The SRSG of UNMIL stated that there had been some positive trends in the Ebola recovery phase, i.e. Liberia was very close to seeing the end of Ebola cases on 9 May; there was a strong desire to bring the situation back to normal; the AFL was active in West Point; two airlines had resumed flights to Liberia; and the government was about to finalize its national Ebola recovery plan. It was a moment of opportunities for Liberia as well as a moment to prepare for the politically intense coming years. The SRSG encouraged partners and the government to maintain attention at this important moment for Liberia.

6. The SRSG identified a number of sources for potential instability in Liberia: 1) structural factors including Liberia's economic model (based on the export of unprocessed resources, providing limited benefits to citizens, labelled in the past as "growth without development"), which offers a growth model which has limitations for the development of human capacity and has not changed for over a hundred years; 2) social exclusion, including as a result of patronage networks which, as long as they are dominant in the economic and political life of the country, leave potential for popular resentment and vulnerability to future shocks (with the question whether transparency and accountability mechanisms can adequately make inroads into the customary ways of doing things), and 3) the deep underlying social anxieties, as those reflected in issues of citizenship and the declaration of Liberia as a Christian state which had been debated at the recent National Constitutional Review Conference in Gbarnga, underscoring tension around identity.

7. The SRSG also shared a few initiatives in Liberia to be highlighted in her statement at the Security Council Briefing on UNMIL to be held that afternoon: 1) decentralization (or deconcentration), including the delivery of justice and security in counties noting the establishment of seven county service centres and the strengthening the roles of superintendents; and 2) implementing a well-funded security transition plan, noting the need not only for political will but capacity, as well as a balance between hardware and software support. The SRSG stated that the initiatives were on the right path. However, attention on justice and security needed to be maintained, as this was clearly an area of interest for investors in Liberia. She concluded that Liberia had delicate times ahead both internally and

in the region, and underlined that Liberia needed the strongest support possible in the years ahead.

8. Delegations expressed appreciation to the Chair of the PBC for keeping attention on peacebuilding gains in the Ebola recovery phase. The drawdown of UNMIL was both a challenge and an opportunity for Liberia's peace and security. Close coordination with the government, UN, Security Council and regional partners was important during the Ebola recovery phase and the UNMIL drawdown.

9. The EU had strengthened partnership with Liberia by establishing a State Building Contract and also held the third political dialogue on 28 April. The EU also had contributed €45 million for governance and security in Liberia and €279 million for the period of 2015-2020. In this regard, it was hoped that progress would be made in the Police Act, the Border and Immigration Act and the Fire and Ammunition Act.

10. A delegation also expressed the need for Liberia to improve the social and economic situation (access to education, social nets, and employment opportunities for youth) in Liberia; strengthening state-society relations; and the need for a stronger regional approach.

11. The World Bank had provided Liberia with US\$197million of support (All but US \$20million of this amount was from the regular IDA, i.e. US\$177 million was additional resources and provided on an exceptional grant terms). The remaining IDA allocation of US\$180 million, including another US\$30 million of budget support, would be provided the following year. A regional project of around US\$25 million, out of which US\$10 million would be national IDA -- was also being prepared which would focus on building preparedness for the future epidemics.

12. The Deputy Head of PBSO referred to his experience on the visit by the PBC Chair to Liberia underling that importance of effective local community efforts in justice and security. He also noted that the issues raised at the meeting were at the core of issues being discussed under the Peacebuilding Architecture Review, including what mechanisms were needed for states to overcome institutional weaknesses and to control tension in society in a peaceful manner. The Member States' process of the review would begin in June. He also encouraged addressing the concerns about the growth model and regional coherence in the three Ebola-affected countries.

13. The Chair suggested that as a next step inviting for a PBC meeting to adopt the 2014 progress report and to begin discussing updating the Statement of Mutual Commitment. The input from the configuration meeting with the Minister and the SRSG, as well as the meeting on Wednesday 29 April with UNDP and DPKO, provided important input to such discussion. The government's plans on Ebola recovery and UNMIL transition would be the basis. The Chair also indicated that he would be requesting the UN system, through PBSO, to provide its analysis on peacebuilding priorities and suggestions for an updated framework of engagement.

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