

Peacebuilding Commission
Informal Meeting of the Liberian Country Specific Configuration
2 December 2015 (3:00 p.m., Conference Room 12)

Chair's Summary

Background

1. The Liberia Configuration of the Peacebuilding Commission (PBC) convened an informal meeting on Wednesday, 2 December 2015 at the United Nations Headquarters to take stock of the peacebuilding challenges and gaps during the security drawdown of UNMIL, as well as to identify the main peacebuilding priorities for Liberia after the completion of the drawdown, with a view for the PBC to contribute to a successful transition. The meeting discussed how the international community, in particular the Peacebuilding Commission, could assist in reinforcing national efforts and ownership through its advocacy role and political accompaniment. The position paper of the Government of Liberia on its peacebuilding and reconciliation priorities (circulated to the configuration members prior to the meeting) provided useful guidance in developing a coherent PBC strategy for Liberia's transition from 2016 to 2017.

Updating the Statement of Mutual Commitments between the Government of Liberia and the Peacebuilding Commission

2. The Government of Liberia proposed to renew the Statement of Mutual Commitments (SMC) for two years (2016-2017) and revise it according to the Government's priorities under three main areas: 1) Enhancing Human Security, 2) Strengthening the Rule of Law, and 3) Promotion of National Reconciliation. Under these three areas, a few specific targets for areas of engagement between the PBC and Liberia could be identified, taking into account the current reality and context such as, a) community empowerment in the security sector; b) promoting social cohesion through strengthening local mechanisms of peace; c) strengthening the capacity of local peace structures to manage and resolve conflicts through training in peacebuilding, conflict analysis, conflict prevention and transformation, mediation, and conflict sensitivity; d) supporting and accelerating national conflict early warning and early response activities; and e) youth employment and empowerment.
3. While the Government of Liberia had rolled out its UNMIL transition plan in 2015 to increase the effectiveness of security institutions, the effect of the Ebola Virus Disease, reduced iron ore exports, closures of concessions, among other issues, had limited the Government's resources, which in turn had impacted the Government's capacity to move forward with the transition. On residual gaps, the Government pointed out that the SMC had not resulted in effective resource mobilization, which it hoped would improve.
4. UNMIL noted that updating the SMC was timely, and its areas of focus remain relevant. It was recommended that the SMC could be updated in the form of a Compact, with the Government of Liberia committing to advance normative and structural reforms to address the root causes of past and potential future conflicts. The Government of Liberia had already demonstrated its commitment to address some of these root causes of conflict by launching important initiatives (the President's Vision 2030; the Strategic Roadmap for National Healing, Peacebuilding and Reconciliation; and legislation related to land

rights and administration, local governance, decentralization and civil service reform). There was still much to be done, however, in the implementation of these initiatives.

5. On the role of the PBC, UNMIL recommended that it further extend its support to other critical structural reform processes. The PBC could also continue using its convening role to keep the attention of the international community focused on peacebuilding and related resource mobilization. The PBC and Peacebuilding Fund (PBF) priorities needed to remain aligned as part of a holistic peacebuilding strategy. The PBC should also continue to advocate support for ongoing and future PBF interventions and assist the Government of Liberia to remain committed to its strategic vision and identify priority peacebuilding areas. Some areas of focus under the revised SMC could include 1) decentralization, 2) land reform, 3) constitutional reform, 4) support for fair and participatory elections in 2017, 5) peacebuilding challenges in the post-Ebola recovery phase, and 6) human security for long-term stability.
6. UNMIL further recommended it would be useful to rationalize the peacebuilding architecture in Liberia, such as by merging the PBF Joint Steering Committee with related oversight mechanisms to increase coherence and efficiency to peacebuilding efforts. A review of funding and oversight mechanisms with key stakeholders would be useful in this regard. Enhancing coordination between project implementing partners and other peacebuilding actors could also help better integrate peacebuilding and development processes.
7. PBSO had initiated prior discussions with relevant UN partners (DPKO, UNMIL, DPA and UNDP) on recommendations for the revised SMC, in response to the request posed to the Secretary-General by the PBC in the 4th review of the SMC. Based on these discussions and the inputs from the Government of Liberia, PBSO recommended some areas of focus under the revised SMC while emphasizing the importance of government ownership and leadership in the implementation of the SMC. These areas included 1) inclusive dialogue including youth, women and local communities; 2) national reconciliation; 3) support for fair, transparent and inclusive electoral processes; 4) strengthening institutional transparency and accountability; 5) land issues; 6) constitutional reform; 7) drug trafficking and corruption; and 8) enhancing the role of communities. PBSO also recommended that conducting a comprehensive conflict analysis would help better define focused areas of engagement. The lessons learned under the Peacebuilding Architecture Review and the Peace Operations Review were key tools to better address gaps in the transition.

Comments from WANEP and Member States

8. The West Africa Network for Peacebuilding (WANEP), participating in the configuration meeting for the first time, underlined the importance of grass-root level participation in peacebuilding processes, which required increased coordination between the Government of Liberia and civil society.
9. Member States appreciated the efforts of the Government of Liberia during the security transition and the position paper of the Government on its peacebuilding and reconciliation priorities. They noted that it was an opportune time to update the SMC as the configuration now had better perspectives to reflect in the SMC.
10. Other comments from Member States included the importance of the role of the PBC as a platform for dialogue where all the international support to Liberia from its partners could

come together to complement and reinforce the peacebuilding goals of the Government of Liberia. Member States also underlined the importance of system-wide coherence of the United Nations for a successful transition in Liberia, and that the United Nations should continue its support to the Government of Liberia to fill residual gaps. Support for the justice and security sectors in line with the security transition should also continue to build national police capacity. The international community should respond to the global issue of drug cartel corruption, terrorism and other related issues that have been laid out the Government's position paper. Member States also looked forward to the Secretary-General's comprehensive assessment of the drawdown in 2016.

11. Following the interventions by Members States, the Government of Liberia elaborated that the decentralization process in Liberia was not aimed to decentralize the security sector but to move security closer to the people and strengthen civilian control and participation. The Liberia National Police and the Bureau of Immigration and Naturalization both maintain their own command structure to address security issues in a timely manner. On the regional security hubs, security needed to be focused at the county level, rather than at the regional level. Liberia, with its porous borders and weak security institutions, also needed to be better prepared towards security risks and threats. The Government of Liberia continued to identify gaps and develop proposals for the security transition in response to requests from the donor community. UNMIL added that the Government had carried out ambitious reforms, but challenges still remained. A solid, permanent basis for peace consolidation in Liberia was needed that not only focused on security issues but also socio-economic dimensions such as economic diversification, youth unemployment and citizens trust in state institutions.

Conclusion

12. There was strong appreciation expressed for the continued contribution of the PBC for maintaining attention on peacebuilding in Liberia. The Government of Liberia was also congratulated for the progress it had made in the implementation of its commitments under the SMC.
13. The Chair concluded the meeting by thanking the configuration members for their participation and substantive inputs. The Chair requested that the process of updating the SMC start immediately, in close consultation with partners based in Liberia and taking into account the priority areas presented at the meeting. The Configuration would continue to meet to share updates on the progress made in updating the SMC. He added that the process of updating the SMC should be as light as possible to avoid overburdening partners in Liberia, and that he was ready to visit Liberia when required.
