

**Ambassadorial-level Meeting of the
Peacebuilding Commission Sierra Leone Configuration
07 December 2015**

Chairperson's Summary

Background

On 7 December 2015, the Peacebuilding Commission (PBC) Sierra Leone Configuration held an Ambassadorial-level meeting to discuss the political, security, preparations for the upcoming elections and socio-economic developments in Sierra Leone. The meeting was held on the one-month anniversary of Sierra Leone having been declared officially free of Ebola by the World Health Organization (WHO). The meeting also exchanged views on priorities for PBC engagement, and the nature of that engagement moving forward, taking into account the PBC's role and comparative advantage.

The Minister of Finance and Economic Development of Sierra Leone, Mr. Kaifala Marah, the Chief of Staff in the Office of the President, Mr. Saidu Conton Sesay, the Minister of Health and Sanitation, H.E. Dr. Abubakarr Fofanah, and H.E. Mr. Amadu Koroma, Deputy Permanent Representative of Sierra Leone briefed the Configuration on the Ebola recovery efforts and the country's main peacebuilding priorities. Mr. Gabriel Rugalema, UN Resident Coordinator a.i. in Sierra Leone, Dr. Yero H.J. Baldeh, Country Representative for the African Development Bank (AfDB) and UNDP Country Director, Mr. Sudipto Mukerjee gave an update on the political, security and socio-economic situation, as well as on the preparations for the upcoming elections by Mr. Sanaullah Baloch, UNDP Constitutional Review. Mr. Moudjib Djinadou, Director Political United Nations Office for West Africa (UNOWA) briefed the Configuration on regional developments and partnerships focusing on Sierra Leone. Ms. Mari Yamashita, Deputy Head of the Peacebuilding Support Office (PBSO) briefed the Configuration on specific peacebuilding dimensions and provided recommendations for PBC's intervention and role in Sierra Leone.

Briefing by the Chair

1. The Chair commended the Government and people of Sierra Leone for their tireless efforts to reach zero cases. He noted that further vigilance was needed to prevent relapse. He reminded the membership that the PBC had been operating in a, lighter, and more responsive manner since Sierra Leone's exit from the Security Council agenda in March 2014. The Ebola crisis obviously presented a new challenge, and the configuration played an active role in mobilizing international attention in response to the crisis, in partnership with the Chairs of the configurations on Liberia and Guinea. He reiterated the PBC's commitment to continue supporting national recovery efforts. The Chair highlighted the report of the Advisory Group of Experts (AGE) on the peacebuilding architecture review also laid out some very good suggestions for how the PBC can strengthen partnerships with regional actors.

2. H.E. Mr. Koroma stated that the Ebola epidemic has had serious socio-economic consequences which in turn have far reaching implications on peacebuilding in Sierra Leone. Providing an overview of the implications, he highlighted that the positive trajectory of the country virtually came to a standstill when the Ebola epidemic started, which mainly affected the youth. He stressed the importance of the country's Ebola Recovery Plan in bringing the country back on track to achieving its national development plan, "the Agenda for

Prosperity”. Mr. Koroma emphasized that the country’s experience with the PBC is one of a valued partnership that places Sierra Leone on the trajectory towards peace, security, development and good governance. This partnership pays great attention to the needs and priorities of national development. Mr. Koroma also noted that the PBC was very instrumental in terms of its advocacy and convening role to bring to the attention of the international community the devastating nature of the Ebola Virus Disease. Regarding the future nature of engagement with the PBC, he voiced ongoing support for the Canadian High Commission in Ghana to play an active role in bringing stakeholders together, which would in effect bring the PBC Configuration Chair more closely to the country.

3. Finance Minister Marah briefed the Configuration on the economic situation of the country. The Sierra Leone economy has suffered from the effect of three shocks: the Ebola crisis, the collapse of the iron ore market (a major source of government revenue), and the flooding that took place in September 2015 in Freetown and neighbouring areas. The combined impact of these shocks has been a contraction of the economy by 21.5% in 2015 – in contrast to original anticipations of a growth rate of 11.3%. The national currency has depreciated, inflation is rising, and contraction of the agricultural and manufacturing section have combined for a loss in projected revenue of \$70M. Minister Marah stated that the focus of expenditure has shifted to the health sector, education, water and supporting vulnerable groups, such as women and youth. In particular, the main priorities and anticipated gaps in the horizon were education, health and energy. Minister Marah further underscored the importance of human development and education, especially tertiary education, and the link to the industry. He expressed the need for the development of a skills development fund that could target specialized training areas. He informed that strong revenue generation strategies and ways to diversify the economy were needed. Robust economic foundations to mobilize revenue were critical. The Minister elaborated on the Government’s strategy to create an enabling environment for businesses to invest and thrive again while highlighting the continuous steps to ensure transparency and accountability of actions. Addressing the financial support aspect, he stated that a trust fund was going to be established in due course.

4. Minister Marah pointed out additional peacebuilding priorities, including security, especially in a sub-regional context, the fight against Boko Haram, the fragility of the justice system, the need to strengthen the rule of law, the legitimate quality of the constitutional review process and building strong institutions to improve database systems and track the implementation of sustained development, also referring to the SDGs. He noted that peacebuilding issues should also be addressed in the context of the New Deal.

5. Chief of Staff, Mr. Sesay stated that post-Ebola is like post-war. There are enormous expectations by communities and large outlay of needs. While it was difficult to prioritize, everything is urgent. He briefed the Configuration on the Ebola recovery plan and its six priority areas (instigating governance and system reform; promoting social cohesion, education and community mobilization; developing Sierra Leone’s private economy; driving economic diversification and encouraging foreign investment). He informed that the President established a Delivery Team, which is providing support to the Ministries, at the sectorial level and in the provinces. The Ebola Recovery Plan is aimed at putting the country back on track and is divided into two phases: a 6-9 month phase concluding in March, with a 10-24 month phase to follow. However, the short-term (6-9 month phase), despite showing impressive results, is not yet fully funded and implemented, and more support will be needed to ensure that planning for the 10-24 month phase remains on track. He highlighted the sustainability, inclusivity and transparency characteristics of the monitoring process and stressed the

importance of the PBC and the PBF in supporting the coordination and attention of the donor community while providing international visibility of the country during the Ebola recovery period. The PBC can assist in resource mobilization by targeting specific areas of intervention to allocate resources, such as the support provided to war veterans and amputees.

6. Providing updates on the latest developments in the country, Mr. Rugalema, R.C. a.i., stated the political and security situation in Sierra Leone remains stable. The country is embarking on preparations for the upcoming elections. The political scene in Sierra Leone continues to be dominated by a mixture of ideologies and rumors that the President might be seeking for another term of office. He informed that the submission for the first draft constitution, which was consulted widely, to the Cabinet was March 2016. Mr. Baloch of UNDP later added that the constitutional review process required a \$20M budget. Mr. Rugalema continued to point out that there is a possibility that political dynamics might override the process after the submission. Concerning the security situation, he stated that porous borders and the high level of unemployed youth pose threats to the country's safety and security. Furthermore, he informed that Sierra Leone had made enormous progress in regard to the rule of law and human rights, according to the Mo Ibrahim Index. Concerning the preparations for the 2018 elections, he stated that the census was scheduled for Dec 2014, which had to be postponed to 2015 because of EVD outbreak. The National Electoral Commission (NEC) embarked on the process of organizing public consultations and outreach to discuss the proposed timeline. Changes might have implications on critical electoral processes (boundary, referendum, updating voting registers). The census started on 4 December and the results are due in Dec. 2016. Mr. Rugalema highlighted the main peacebuilding priorities moving forward, including good governance and the rule of law, economic growth and stronger regional collaboration, leveraging resources at regional (MRU and ECOWAS) level, sound disaster risk reduction strategies and effective decentralization. In regard to the role of the PBC, he emphasized the importance of strong advocacy to keep the attention of the international community on Sierra Leone, resource mobilization, as well as the exchange of knowledge and lessons learned among the PBC membership.

7. Dr. Baldeh of the AfDB congratulated the Government of Sierra Leone for its leadership during the crisis and its commitment to consolidate gains. He stated that despite Ebola, the Government is able to sustain and remain committed to major political and economic issues (constitutional review, census) and the New Deal, which shows its commitment to consolidate gains. Mr. Mukerjee of UNDP stated that the whole world rose to the occasion when Sierra Leone was hit with a deadly disease. Non-traditional donors made pledges. It was important that the international community and the UN were able to help Sierra Leone mobilize and secure those resources, making reference to the Multi-Partner Trust Fund (MPTF) office and Sierra Leone Ebola Recovery Fund. He further emphasized that the PBC could reach out to non-traditional donors, help ensure funds are secured as soon as possible. Expressing the need for reliable funding and support from the international community, he warned that there was a risk of slippage, if resources are not secured.

8. Health Minister Fofanah briefed on the health components of the Ebola Recovery Plan. He echoed the importance of decentralization while outlining two main priorities: resilient zero cases and restoration of essential health services. He stated that women and children have suffered the most from the health crisis.

9. Mr. Djinadou from UNOWA informed that since the drawdown of UNIPSIL, they have maintained interaction with the UN Resident Coordinator's Office in Sierra Leone. He

stressed the importance of regional cooperation and welcomed the strong partnership with the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the Economic Community of West African States Monitoring Group (ECOMOG) in this regard. He informed that UNOWA will continue to work closely with regional organizations and UNOWA SRSG will continue to address cross-border issues using his good offices, including drug trafficking through the West Africa Coast Initiative (WACI). He added that UNOWA continues to work closely with the Mano River Union (MRU) on cross-border security issues. He expects the workplan for 2016 to be finalized soon. He added that ECOWAS was planning to designate a representative in Freetown, which would help strengthen regional activities.

10. Member States congratulated the Government of Sierra Leone for overcoming the Ebola crisis and commended the phased and focused national recovery plan. They stressed the importance of continued vigilance and the reflection on lessons learned. Struck by the breadth of activity on which the Government is engaged and committed to recover from the health crisis, Member States reaffirmed their commitment and support during the country's economic and social recovery period. They stressed the importance of the implementation of the National Ebola Recovery Plan and the Agenda for Prosperity. One Member State concurred that security and legal issues were important priorities, while local elections, the constitutional review process are key to having successful elections in 2018. One Member State inquired about the importance of livelihoods and the role of the private sector, especially in the light of the fact that two mining companies recently closed. On the importance of tackling corruption, Minister Marah informed that the procurement process remains one of the biggest challenges to address, which the Government is making efforts to regularize procurement procedures and an economic advisory team has been put in place. He proposed to develop partnerships that could provide support to the Government fiscal process.

11. Some Member States highlighted the importance of closer regional and sub-regional cooperation. They stressed the utmost important of aligning national and regional strategies. Sustained support from the donor and international community was also emphasized.

12. Member States acknowledged the important role that the PBC played during the health crisis. Furthermore, it is essential that the PBC remains proactively engaged, act as a stimulus and provide support to the Government. It is also particularly important to maintain and strengthen policy support to Government. One Member State stated that PBC should remain the forum to track continued efforts to keep EVD in control. It is also important to keep encouraging those who have made commitments to follow through. Partners, including PBSO and the PBC were encouraged to assist resource mobilization efforts and resource commitments.

13. Recalling the UN Secretary-General in March 2015 when he hailed Sierra Leone as the most successful case of peacekeeping, peacebuilding and recovery, main priorities were highlighted by Member States, including lessons learned from Sierra Leone and how the PBC helped in that regard, identifying priorities for the government looking ahead and identifying concrete recommendations for how PBC can further provide support. Members stressed the need to further explore the PBC's role and mode of engagement moving forward.

14. In her closing remarks, Ms. Yamashita from PBSO iterated that there are many short and long-term challenges and opportunities not only in the social and economic aspects but also political. She emphasized that despite Sierra Leone's peacebuilding gains, a key lesson

from the Ebola crisis is the importance of crisis management and the need for an early conflict warning system to prevent crises in the future. On regional coordination, she underscored the need for a more holistic and well-coordinated approach by the UN system and the international community (including donors) to the Ebola recovery efforts. In this regard, she encouraged the PBC to continue to advocate for high international attention and support in the Ebola recovery efforts and to advocate for peacebuilding priorities. Ms. Yamashita stated that the PBC can play a part in efforts to engender partnerships with regional and sub-regional organizations on peacebuilding issues. She expressed PBSO's support to strengthen this collaboration and invites regional bodies, UNCT and UNOWA to revert to us with an outcome for further consultations. She highlighted that the PBC is well placed to further use its platform to foster strategic coherence at the regional level on peacebuilding priorities, as called in the AGE report.

15. Ms. Yamashita informed that in the coming period, the PBC, guided by the recent Peacebuilding Review and alternative forms of engagement, will be undertaking a reflection of its accompaniment to Sierra Leone, with an eye on how the United Nations can further support sustainable peace. Building on its recommendations on the PBC engagement in 2014 before the Ebola crisis, she welcomed the Chair's visit to undertake a light stock-taking of this approach in the first quarter of 2016. She suggested that the PBF could consider developing a new funding area around efforts to strengthen the peacebuilding capacity of regional and sub-regional organizations. With this backdrop, PBSO would request the PBC to consider what might be a practical and an effective way the PBF can better support its efforts. Furthermore, she reiterated that PBSO stands ready to continue to support the PBC. She announced that PBSO plans to organize the second Peacebuilding Assessment Mission (PAM) to Sierra Leone, in close collaboration with the Government and UNCT, before the Chair's visit in early 2016. The PAM will need to look at the current national peacebuilding priorities, take stock of the developments on the ground and provide concrete recommendations for the PBC's role and type of engagement in specific peacebuilding priority areas to consider and endorse. The PAM will need to examine the PBF programmatic aspects as well, which was put on hold or reprogrammed. In addition, in close consultations with UNOWA, it will also need to further explore clear areas of collaboration with regional bodies in line with the ongoing support to the peacebuilding priorities.

16. In closing, Mr. Koroma stressed the progress made in the areas of freedom of expression and the inclusion of women, youth and persons with disabilities. The Chair summarized the discussions as follows:

- Highlighted the breadth and depth of main priorities and planning efforts by the Government, which showed the level of clarity on how the international community can best support their ongoing efforts;
- Emphasized the keen interest by the Government, the UN, the international community and PBC to redouble commitments to ensure international visibility remains on national priorities and needs while identifying remaining gaps and challenges;
- Underscored the important role of the Configuration in advocating and awareness raising;
- Emphasized national priorities: Governance and rule of law, regional collaboration, DRR, decentralization

- Highlighting the ongoing work on anticorruption and transparency by the Government, support is needed for Government on economic recovery, skills development while ensuring PBC is an advocate for Government's priorities;
- Reiterated the need to support holistic coordination and resource mobilization – ensure that commitments that have been met, which is a role for PBC to follow up.

17. The Chair highlighted the next steps to be undertaken by the PBC following the discussions of the meeting:

- a. Prepare Chair's summary for PBC circulation;
- b. Circulate a draft PBC Statement to Members for approval, congratulating the Government on being declared free of Ebola and reiterating its commitment to support peacebuilding efforts in Sierra Leone; and
- c. Conduct PAM followed by a Chair's visit in early 2016.
