

**Peacebuilding Commission**  
**Ambassadorial-level meeting on elections in Liberia**  
**29 September 2023**

**Chair's Summary**

On 29 September 2023, the Peacebuilding Commission (PBC) convened an Ambassadorial-level meeting to take stock of progress towards the conduct of peaceful, inclusive, transparent, free, fair, and credible elections in Liberia. The meeting focused on follow-up on the recommendations made in the last meeting of the Liberia Configuration on 25 April 2023. Measures, including those aimed at preventing electoral violence and advancing women's and youth participation in electoral process were discussed. The Commission underscored that the 10 October 2023 elections are a crucial milestone towards consolidating peace, democracy, reconciliation, and sustainable and inclusive development in Liberia, but also within the region. In that regard, they called for the full adherence to the rule of law, the Farmington River Declaration as well as the full operationalization of the Violence against Women in Elections and Politics (VAWiE/P) Protocol in support of a peaceful and inclusive electoral environment. The Commission also underscored the critical and constructive role of Liberian youth in electoral processes and encouraged their meaningful participation.

1. On 29 September 2023, ten days before the presidential and legislative elections in Liberia, the Chair of the PBC Liberia Configuration, H.E. Ms. Anna Karin Eneström, convened an Ambassadorial-level meeting on the progress towards the conduct of peaceful, inclusive, transparent, free, fair, and credible elections, focusing on follow-up of the Chair's recommendations of the PBC Liberia Configuration meeting of 25 April 2023.
2. In her opening remarks, the Chair commended the preparatory process and campaigning period which had so far passed by relatively peacefully. She acknowledged the steady progress in meeting the elections timetable and concrete measures taken to ensure peaceful, credible, free, and fair elections, including the disbursement of \$49.8 million of the \$53 million election budget to the NEC by the Government of Liberia, while noting the remaining balance of \$3.2 million. The Chair noted the limited resources dedicated to election security, which remained a concern in a polarized context and with the prevalence of inflammatory rhetoric and misinformation and disinformation. She underscored the revised Farmington River Declaration being a crucial commitment to ensuring free, fair, peaceful, transparent, credible, and non-violent elections, and judicial resolution of electoral disputes. The Chair underscored the importance of ensuring inclusive elections, and called on all signatory parties to implement the memorandum of understanding signed in May 2023 committing them to a 30 percent gender quota for candidate lists for the 2023 elections, as well as the full operationalization of the VAWiE/P Protocol. Furthermore, she stressed the need for strengthened civic and voter's education during and beyond the 2023 elections to assuring a level-playing field will improve the electorates confidence in the democratic process. In closing, the Chair ensured the PBC's continued close engagement and support to Liberia as the country undertakes these historic elections.
3. **H.E. Mr. Dee-Maxwell Saah Kemayah, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Liberia**, highlighted Liberia's commitment to democracy, including through the NEC's substantial progress in

executing the electoral schedule and the Government's electoral budgetary obligations. He informed of the Government's disbursement of \$4 million dollars to the Joint Security of Liberia in support of peaceful elections. Further, he noted that the remaining balance of \$3.2 of the elections budget, intended to be utilized should the elections proceed to a second round, is being processed. He recognized the polarized political environment yet emphasized stakeholders' willingness to maintaining peace and democracy. While acknowledging the obstacles to the inclusion of women and youth in politics and electoral process, he underscored the commendable progress and the Government's commitment to ensuring their full, equal, and meaningful participation. He concluded by reiterating the commitment to the Farmington River Declaration and recognized the PBC's support in mobilizing international support for Liberia's peacebuilding priorities, including to the general elections.

4. On behalf of the Minister of Internal Affairs, H.E Mr. Varney Sirleaf, **Hon. Momolu S. Johnson, Deputy Minister for Administration of Internal Affairs of Liberia**, acknowledged the PBC's continuous support towards peace consolidation efforts in Liberia and commended the Peacebuilding Fund's (PBF) support towards a peaceful electoral environment, including strengthening community policing and women's political participation. He informed that the PBF support has contributed to strengthening the capacity of state institutions, particularly conflict early warning and early response infrastructure such as the National Situation room on Elections, as well as training of electoral security officers in human rights. He also informed of the High-Level National Conference on Integrity, which resulted in 17-count resolutions that would assist to safeguard the integrity of the upcoming elections and beyond.
5. On behalf of the Minister of Justice and Attorney General, H.E. Mr. Frank Musah Dean Jr., **Hon. Marvin Sarkor, Deputy Inspector General for Operations of the Liberia National Police**, noted the Liberian National Police 2023 Elections Plan consisting of conflict prevention, conflict management, and post-election security. He informed of the key measures in support of peaceful electoral environment, including security officers' elections management training aimed at contributing to conflict prevention as well as the distribution of necessary equipment to effectively manage election security. Furthermore, several key facilities and measures for joint elections security development, particularly the establishment of the National Command Post and Counties Response Centers, was highlighted. He assured that Joint Security visibility would be enhanced and comprehensive security measures would be in place for the post-election period.
6. **Hon. Davidetta Browne Lansana, Chairperson of the National Elections Commission**, informed of the successful Biometric Voter Registration process of over 2,4 million registered voters as well as the 1,026 qualified candidates of which 15 percent (159) are women. She informed of the NEC's activities, including Civic and Voter Education (CVE) through 81 CVE cells, the training on polling and counting by magistrates, and transparency, communication, and gender outreach efforts along with the endeavors to address logistical challenges, particularly in remote areas. She noted the remaining elections funding gap of \$3.2 million and the efforts to secure the remaining funds from the Government. She emphasized the NEC's commitment to conducting free, fair, and credible elections and the ongoing efforts to

addressing concerns. She clarified that 50 per cent of the registered voters are women, which represents a paradigm shift.

7. **Ms. Christine Umutoni, UN Resident Coordinator in Liberia**, commended the progress made since the PBC Liberia Configuration meeting in April 2023. She informed of the arrival of electoral materials, the completion of the Biometric Voter Registration system audit, civic and voter education activities, and the establishment of a Strategic Communication Committee. She emphasized the importance of building public confidence in the process, given reports of concerns over transparency and impartiality. She noted that ten new political parties and 175 out of 199 independent candidates added their signatures to the revised Farmington River Declaration on 22 July, committing to a violence-free election. She commended the NEC and Joint Security for their proactive actions to prevent electoral violence, which continues to require a strengthened legal framework and coordination. Furthermore, she acknowledged the UN's comprehensive electoral assistance and reaffirmed the UN's commitment to support Liberia in achieving the SDGs and maintaining peace beyond the elections.
8. **Ms. Elizabeth Spehar, Assistant Secretary-General for Peacebuilding Support**, underscored the elections as a pivotal moment for Liberia to strengthen its democracy, peace, and sustainable development and commended the Government and the NEC for the significant progress in electoral preparations. Additionally, she acknowledged the pivotal role of the Liberian civil society, particularly women and youth, in shaping the electoral process. She highlighted the PBF's contribution of \$5 million to foster inclusivity and peace in the electoral environment and provided information on the achievements, including the signing of the VAWiE/P Protocol, establishment of early warning and response systems, and training of electoral security officers. She reaffirmed PBSO's commitment to supporting Liberia's peacebuilding priorities through the \$10 million PBF support package, focusing on youth empowerment, responsive and accountable decentralized service delivery, and the resolution of land conflicts in concession areas.
9. **Ms. Peace Thor Mahteh-Boyee, Program Director of Naymote Partners for Democratic Development**, stressed the need for the inclusion of women and youth in electoral processes and politics as a crucial aspect of national progress. She acknowledged Liberia's efforts to promote inclusivity in decision-making processes, including the signing of various protocols and agreements, aimed at safeguarding women's participation and preserving peace and democracy. She informed of the progressive initiatives and organizations, including Naymote-Liberia and the National Young Women Political Council of Liberia, empowering young women in politics through capacity-building programs. Further, civic engagement and voter awareness campaigns are actively reaching out to communities and utilizing digital platforms to engage women and youth. To enhance inclusivity, she suggested prioritizing legal reforms, increasing public awareness and voter education, establishing funding mechanisms for women and youth in politics, and ensuring transparent political funding to combat corruption. She also encouraged strengthening legal measures to protect women and youth from political harassment and violence.

## **10. Member States welcomed the briefings and made the following observations:**

- The Commission commended the remarkable progress on the electoral preparations and welcomed the efforts of the Liberian Government and the NEC to ensure inclusive and peaceful elections, demonstrating democratic progress and Liberia's full ownership of the electoral process. They highlighted the importance of the 2023 elections as pivotal in consolidating peace nationally, but also reverberating into the region.
- They underlined the crucial role of the NEC in ensuring the conditions to fair and transparent elections.
- They emphasized the key role of the civil society in inclusive electoral processes and preventing violence.
- They called for the full adherence to the Farmington River Declaration and the full operationalization of the VAWiE/P Protocol. They encouraged the remaining political parties, coalitions, and alliances to sign the VAWiE/P Protocol.
- They encouraged the Government to disburse the remaining electoral financing to the NEC.
- They noted the proliferation of hate speech, misinformation, and the shrinking civic space with a concern and underscored the importance of ensuring a peaceful and transparent electoral environment and post-election period. In that regard, they urged all political actors to respect the rule of law and to refrain from acts that could incite violence and polarize public opinion.
- They acknowledged the central role of the PBF in support of peacebuilding and sustaining peace, as well as ensuring the sustainability of the electoral process in Liberia. In this respect, they called for more sustainable funding to the PBF, including assessed and voluntary contributions, to sustain peace in Liberia.
- They underscored the importance of women's participation in politics, electoral processes, and peacebuilding and commended the measures to strengthen their full, equal and meaningful participation. They noted the low number of women candidates with a concern and called for the 30 per cent gender quota for political party leadership and candidate listings in the Elections Law. They also encouraged the Liberian Government to intensify the efforts to ensure their representation at all levels of governance and to tackle the underlying factors of the obstacles to their participation.
- They highlighted the constructive and positive role of youth in electoral process and building and sustaining peace. They commended the measures aimed at promoting the political engagement of youth as well as the establishment of the Youth Task Force Against Election Violence and the Inter-Party Youth Council. They urged to ensure their meaningful participation in electoral processes, politics, and peacebuilding.
- They emphasized the importance of the cooperation between the PBC and the Liberian Government in support of peacebuilding and sustaining peace, testifying the concrete value of the Commission's support.

### ***Chair's recommendations***

- Continue advocating for and monitoring the full adherence to the Farmington River Declaration. Encouraging stakeholders, in the event of any electoral disputes, to resort to all legal electoral dispute mechanisms to seek redress.

- Ensuring women's full, equal, and meaningful participation in peacebuilding, politics, and electoral process at all levels during and beyond the 2023 elections. In this respect, continue advocating and monitoring the 30 per cent gender quota for political party leadership and party candidate lists in the new Elections Law.
- Ensuring the full and timely operationalization of the VAWIE/P Protocol.
- Continue advocating for and supporting the meaningful participation of youth in in peacebuilding, politics, and electoral processes during and beyond the 2023 elections.
- Ensuring that the NEC is fully funded to deliver on its mandate and urging the Liberian Government to transfer any outstanding funds to the NEC in a timely manner.
- Calling on all stakeholders to refrain from inciteful language and not to share disinformation or misinformation.
- Encouraging national authorities and international partners to support continuous inclusive dialogue and strengthened civic education as a key to ensuring peaceful, free, fair, transparent, credible, and inclusive elections.