

REFERENCE:

**Statement by H.E. Mr. Staffan Tillander, Chair of the Liberia Configuration of the
Peacebuilding Commission, to the Security Council on
20 March 2014**

Let me first express my appreciation to the Presidency of the Security Council for the invitation to give the PBC's perspectives on key peacebuilding challenges facing Liberia.

I will focus my remarks on justice and security, national reconciliation, and land tenure and natural resources, and also discuss mobilisation of support and resources, and the need to accelerate capacity building in view of the UNMIL transition.

The PBC Country Configuration for Liberia – with its around 40 member states – offers support based on the Statement of Mutual Commitments (SMC), and in close collaboration with the SRSG and UNMIL.

As we are now in the process of finalizing the third review of the SMC, we can conclude that while some progress has been made on building capacity in justice and security, and while some aspects of national reconciliation have moved forward, many of the commitments still remain unfulfilled.

For Liberia to implement its own plans and stated policy goals, there is a need for sustained attention and focus on key peacebuilding challenges from the Government. While the international community certainly can play an important supportive role, there is no substitute for Liberian ownership, political will and leadership. The good offices of the UN and partners can support Liberian continued attention to peacebuilding priorities through dialogue and marshaling of support and resources.

An area of particular concern is justice and rule of law. Progress here has been very slow, as is evident in police training but also in the slow pace of reform of the judiciary, corrections and other areas. As UNMIL's drawdown continues, it is necessary for Liberian institutions to increase their capacity to provide satisfactory standards of justice, security and other related services across the country. What can then be done to accelerate progress?

One example was offered during my most recent visit, as the Minister of Finance, in connection with the SMC discussion, initiated a series of meetings with all involved aimed at ensuring that police

training will get the decisions, commitments and budget necessary to move ahead. This high-level coordinated engagement needs to continue, and implementation must follow. Sustained attention is necessary. If this happens, police training may improve. There is no reason why this should not be possible, but experiences from the last 18 months have not been encouraging in this regard. Hopefully, we should now see a change.

Sustainability of progress is a concern, as is the need to ensure a balanced strengthening of the entire rule of law chain. As I could observe during my recent visit to Liberia, relations between the state and citizens are fragile and the sense of mutual trust is weak. To improve public trust, political and judicial services must focus on quality as well as quantity and ensure stronger public oversight. A comprehensive and coordinated approach is necessary, effectively linking short term measures to long term development plans. UNMIL and the UN Country Team should continue to work hand in hand and increase their integration. For UNDP, no other task is more important than this, and its contribution must be effective, efficient and timely. This is especially true in view of the UNMIL drawdown and the need to coordinate a comprehensive and integrated approach to rule of law.

The regional justice and security hubs aim to facilitate decentralization and better access to justice for all levels of society in every region of the country. The first hub in Gbarnga is now providing services to the three counties; the impact can be felt to varying degrees throughout the counties concerned and is being assessed and evaluated to guide future efforts. In particular, quicker deployment of police officers to emergency situations in the hub counties has prevented conflicts to escalate. One major challenge has however been public outreach, to inform people in all three hub counties about the services that the hub is offering. Unfortunately, as surveys have shown, the hub is known mostly to people living in the Gbarnga region.

Based on lessons learned from hub one, including the public outreach component, services are beginning to be delivered from hubs two and three. But this time the focus has been on services rather than infrastructure for quicker roll-out. These are positive developments, in the right direction, although not fast enough especially in view of UNMIL's drawdown.

Several bilateral partners are already involved in justice and security. Some are in the process of stepping up support, including the EU, considering substantial levels and with long-term commitment. For this to be possible and have the intended effects, Government commitment must be strong and evident through sufficient budget allocations, commitment to reform and political will. Bilateral donors would be more eager to engage when linked to clear government leadership and strategy.

On national reconciliation, the Government of Liberia launched the Palava Hut programme, the national history project, and the national symbols project. Discussion on south-south cooperation may lead to inspiring exchange of experiences from other countries. But in most of those areas, implementation remains very slow. The Liberian Government must ensure that institutions responsible

for the different areas have the determination, mandate and resources necessary, and that implementation is accelerated within the coordinated framework of the Roadmap for Reconciliation. There is a need for action to deal with the past, with truth-telling, atonement and reconciliation, to ensure women's participation, and to follow up recommendations of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. PBF has provided considerable support already, and it is encouraging that the Government has stated that it will commit additional resources to implementation. This will be absolutely essential. There is also a need for a costed and coordinated implementation plan. The PBC is prepared to support Government-led efforts to marshal support and resources for national reconciliation.

Land and natural resources are essential for peacebuilding efforts. If managed right, they may contribute to peace consolidation and sustainable economic growth. During my last visit, I had the opportunity to see some of the progress made on land dispute resolution supported by UN Habitat, the World Bank and the United States. The land law and the establishment of a land agency could become important tools for further progress in dealing with conflicting claims to land by communities, concessions and individuals. This is also one of the issues raised in the letter dated 12 December 2013 which I received from the Chair of the Committee established pursuant to resolution 1521 (2003), and one of several issues I raised with the President and Ministers. Government representatives acknowledged that more is needed to deal with the challenges and to ensure a sustainable management of land and natural resources. The World Bank and UNDP are now stepping up efforts and support in this area, including with support from PBF and encouragement from PBC.

In line with its stated intention to fight corruption, the Government of Liberia has recently taken actions to take perpetrators to court. This is welcome, but more needs to be done to ensure that corruption does not go unpunished. Oversight mechanisms need to be strengthened across all public institutions. The judiciary needs to be strengthened and the Anti-Corruption Commission should be given the means and tools to ensure accountability in complementarity to the criminal justice system.

Civil society plays an important role in channeling views of groups, individuals, and local communities, thus supporting a free flow of information that will help decision makers in the private and public sectors to better understand the nature of the challenges, and to promote mechanisms that will help resolve disputes, or maybe even deal with them before they appear. It is important to secure the political space from which these organizations operate.

Nowhere is this more obvious than on gender issues, where women can play a key role in promoting peace and reconciliation with strong and sustained support from Ministers concerned, from UN Women and UNMIL. With PBF increasing its allocation for gender-related activities, above the 15% target set by the Secretary General, the Government and partners have all reasons to step up their efforts to ensure that women can play the necessary role in building sustainable peace in Liberia.

The Liberian Agenda for Transformation, together with the Government's commitment to elaborate a New Deal Compact, should provide a continued and strengthened focus on all five state- and peacebuilding goals, including those covered by the SMC. The PBC should contribute to this effort and ensure that its work supports national ownership and is aligned with such jointly elaborated mechanisms.
