

Peacebuilding Commission – Liberia Configuration
Report of the Chair’s visits to Washington, D.C. 10 & 11 February 2011

In advance of my second trip to Liberia, I traveled, on behalf of the Configuration, to Washington, D.C. to consult U.S. Government and World Bank Officials on their activities in Liberia relevant to those of the Peacebuilding Commission. The Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) also hosted a round table which provided an opportunity to brief relevant foreign policy and security actors in Washington about the PBC’s engagement in Liberia. Andrei Shkourko (DPKO) and Tammi Sharpe (PBSO) accompanied me. The agenda indicating participants is attached as Annex 1.

On 10 February, I met with a wide range of senior U.S. Government Officials in the Department of Defense (DoD) and Department of State (DoS). With full recognition to the strides made by the Liberian Government, U.S. Government Officials understood the enormity of the remaining peacebuilding challenges in Liberia and expressed interest to explore how to coordinate with the PBC to better guarantee success. The invaluable role played by UNMIL in security management was repeatedly underlined.

My first meeting was at the Department of Defence (DoD) with a multi-disciplinary team from DoD including AFRICOM. We reviewed the reform of the Armed Forces of Liberia (AFL) and the Ministry of Defense, both of which fall within DoD’s ambit. The DoD shared its view that the AFL is unlikely to be fully operational by 2012, which is the date recorded as part of UNMIL’s benchmark. For the near future, the AFL will continue to operate unarmed with the weapons depot remaining under the control of the U.S. Embassy. A critical limitation concerns weak civilian oversight with the reform of the AFL having outpaced that of the Ministry of Defense (MoD). Through the Defense Institution Reform Initiative, a dedicated team of defense experts has been working with the Ministry to finalize the Defense Strategy. The next focus of the Initiative will be supporting MoD’s implementation of the Strategy including strengthening relations between the MoD and AFL. DoD is considering this more balanced approach of supporting both Army and MoD reform as a potential model for future U.S. defense reform.

At the DoS, I meet separately with officials from the Africa Bureau, International Organization Affairs (IO), USAID, International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs (INL) and Bureau Population, Refugee and Migration (BPRM). DoS provides significant support in the rule of law sector and to national reconciliation efforts. On the latter, realizing the historical links between the U.S. and Liberia, U.S. officials showed interest to examine how the U.S. Government could assist in establishing a Liberian National Historical Commission as provided for in the Truth and Reconciliation Report. In this regard, they undertook to look into what can be done including the possibility of support from the Library of Congress and the U.S. National Archives. Elements of security sector reform covering the police and immigration also fall within the scope of DoS’ coverage. In this area, transnational crime is seen as one of the key threats in the sub-region and concern was expressed about how to assist the different security actors to be able to effectively deter entrance of criminal networks in Liberia. It was proposed for the PBC to contact the Panel of Experts to ascertain their

views on this topic in particular on the flows of money of drug transiting through the sub-region. In DoS, I also asked my interlocutors to look into the possibility of the US providing an additional contribution to the Peacebuilding Fund.

On 11 February, two sets of meetings were held at the World Bank through which some key areas of common interest emerged. In the first meeting, we delve into the World Bank's programme with the Liberia Country Management Unit. Colleagues at the Bank provided a positive economic outlook for the country. It was noted that recovery of the rubber and palm oil markets and increased activity in the private sector namely in logging and mining are generating income. However, these activities are having a limited impact on job creation. The Bank recently carried out an assessment of its cash for work programme concluding that the programme should continue and could benefit with the support of other donors. The Bank will share this assessment in view of the youth pilot programme that the PBC is considering as part of its programme in Liberia. The Security and Justice Hubs as they pertain to the extension of government services throughout the country is of interest to the Bank's larger support activities with the Good Governance Commission. Both bodies also share an interest to assist the Government to be able to implement measures to prevent money laundering. On this the Bank informed that the Deputy Minister of Revenue is concerned about the Government's limitations in being able to prosecute corruption cases and is examining means to address this gap. The Bank is presently preparing a mid-term assessment of its Liberia Country Assistance Strategy (CAS), which should be available in April. The CAS, which was due to end this year, will be extended by a year.

A working lunch meeting was organized by the Fragile and Conflict Affected Countries Group of the World Bank. This discussion was of a thematic nature with a strong focus on prosecution of financial crimes. The Bank outlined some applicable practices in other countries that might be duplicated in Liberia.

CSIS hosted a roundtable on the PBC's engagement in Liberia bringing together an array of different foreign policy and security actors. Following my introductory remarks on the focus of the PBC and my impressions from my first trip, I exchanged views on the peacebuilding challenges in Liberia as well as the international community's approach to peacebuilding. Some of the key questions and points raised by participants were on coordination, sequencing of interventions, transition, gender and role of the private sector and non-governmental organizations. Prior to this roundtable I had the opportunity to also meet individually with Steve McDonald of the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars Africa Program, who had just returned from a trip to Liberia and had expressed interest in hosting a roundtable for the PBC. He shared his concerns about strains that the Ivorian crisis could have on Liberia.

My consultations in Washington, D.C. have been useful and timely. The U.S. senior officials I met have confirmed in the strongest terms the political will and determination of the U.S. Government to help complete the peace consolidation process in Liberia. In this endeavor they would be ready to closely cooperate with the Peacebuilding Commission in order to contribute to the successful transition of security management from UNMIL to the Government and to assist national reconciliation.

ANNEX 1
LIST OF MEETING PARTICIPANTS

Department of Defense

Dr. Jim Schear, Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Partnership Strategy and Stability Operations, Office of the Secretary of Defense (OSD) for Policy, Special Operations/Low Intensity Conflict.

Major General Christopher Leins, Deputy Director for Africa, Directorate of Plans and Policy (J5), Joint Chiefs of Staff

Catherine Wiesner, Principal Director for African Affairs, OSD Policy, International Security Affairs

Phil Kellogg, West Africa Desk Officer, African Affairs, OSD Policy, International Security Affairs

David Cate, Director, Coalition Affairs, Partnership Strategy and Stability Operations, OSD for Policy, Special Operations/ low Intensity Conflict

Carrie Casey, Defense Reform Officer, Partnership Strategy and Stability Operations, OSD for Policy, Special Operations/Low Intensity Conflict

Nancy Oliver, Assistant Deputy Director for Partnership Strategy, Directorate of Plans and Policy (J5), Joint Chiefs of Staff

Karen Marmaud, Director AFRICOM Washington Liaison Office

Jonathan Morgenstein, Fellow, Rule of Law and Humanitarian Policy, OSD Policy.

William Mock, Africa Peacekeeping Policy and Operations (Asia, Europe & West Africa) Desk Officer, Partnership Strategy and Stability Operations, OSD for Policy, Special Operations/Low Intensity Conflict

USAID

Neil Levine, Director of the Office of Conflict Management and Mitigation

Sarah Crites, Liberia Desk Officer

Andrew Sweet, Conflict Advisor

Rachel Locke, Conflict Specialist

INL

Bill McGlynn , Principal- Deputy Assistant Secretary

Helene Kessler, Director of INL office for Africa and the Middle East

Kate Higgins, IO International Relations Officer

Jan Pfundheller, INL Police Advisor;

Cassandra Stuart, INL/PC Foreign Affairs Officer

Allison Henry-Plotts, INL/Africa Middle East Foreign Affairs Officer

Andrew Silski, Liberia Desk Officer (AF/W)

IO and Africa Bureau

Esther Brimmer, Assistant Secretary

Victoria Tori Holt, Deputy Assistant Secretary

Mary Beth Leonard, Director of AF office for West Africa

Andrew Silski, AF Desk Officer for Liberia

Kate Higgins, IO International Relations Officer

Bureau Population, Refugees and Migration

Assistant Secretary Eric Schwartz

Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars

Steve McDonald, Consulting Director, Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars
Africa Program, Project on Leadership and Building State Capacity

World Bank***Liberia Country Management Unit***

Renee Desclaux, Snr. Operation Officer

Erol Graham, Snr. Country Economist

Bernard Harborne, Lead Conflict Advisor

Fragile and Conflict-Affected Countries Group Operations Policy and Country Services

Faris Hadad-Zervos, Acting Director

Roisin de Burca, Senior Operations Officer (SPF Coordinator),

Gregory Ellis, Senior Operations Officer,

Joseph P. Saba, Consultant,

Stephen Ndegwa, Adviser (Research, Knowledge and Learning),

CSIS Roundtable Participants

Mayesha Alam, The Henry L. Stimson Center

Joy Aoun, CSIS

Louis-Alexandre Berg, USAID

Lauren Bieniek, CSIS

Jennifer G. Cooke, CSIS

Chandrima Das, Better World Campaign

Luis Domenech, Better World Campaign

Richard Downie, CSIS

Annalise Everett, National Democratic Institute

Laura Hickey, CSIS

Christopher Holshek, U.S. Army

Brian Kennedy, CSIS

Abigail Long, Humanity United

Taylor Mayol, CSIS

Steven McDonald, Woodrow Wilson Center

Sean McFate, National Defense University

Casey McHugh, George Washington University

Marie Okabe, UN Information Center

Patrick J. Pratt, David L. Boren Scholar

Mark Quarterman, CSIS

Stephanie Sanok, CSIS

Farha Tahir, CSIS

