

**Summary of the visit of H.E. Mr. Staffan Tillander, Chair of the Liberia Configuration,
Peacebuilding Commission, to Liberia
2-7 February 2014**

Purpose of the visit

1. The Chair of the Liberia Configuration of the Peacebuilding Commission (PBC), H.E. Mr. Staffan Tillander, visited Liberia from 2 to 7 February 2014. He was accompanied by Mr. Kenneth Gluck, Director and Deputy Head of the Peacebuilding Support Office (PBSO) and Ms. Kaori Minami, Peacebuilding Officer, PBSO. H.E. Ms. Marjon V. Kamara, Permanent Representative of Liberia to the United Nations, joined the Chair in meetings with senior Liberian government officials.
2. The purpose of the visit was 1) to hold discussions with stakeholders concerning peacebuilding efforts in Liberia, including on the Statement of Mutual Commitments (SMC); 2) to discuss the status of implementation of the Roadmap for National Healing and Reconciliation; 3) to explore means of accelerating progress on justice and security; and 4) to contribute to strategies for coordinated support. The Chair also held discussions on land-related issues, natural resources and community involvement as part of his follow up to the letter from the Sanctions Committee on Liberia of 12 December 2013 and he continued discussions with international financial institutions in support of peacebuilding efforts in Liberia.
3. The Chair met with the President of Liberia, Minister of Internal Affairs, Peace Ambassador George Weah, Deputy Minister of Lands and Mines and Energy, Chair of the Independent National Human Rights Commission, Ambassador of ECOWAS to Liberia, the donor community, the World Bank Office in Monrovia, senior officials of UNMIL and UN Country Team members. He also visited Kakata City of Margibi County, the regional justice and security hub in Gbarnga of Bong County and Sinje of Grand Cape Mount County to engage in land issues and natural resource management issues.
4. Liberia still faces many peacebuilding challenges as it strides into a new year; a year that should witness senatorial elections in October and a continued gradual drawdown of UNMIL's military presence. There has been progress in many aspects under the three pillars of the Statement of Mutual Commitments, yet there remains a number of critical areas in which further progress is required, in particular, efforts in the justice and security sector and the national reconciliation process.

Meeting with the President of Liberia

5. The Chair raised four main points with the President: 1) progress and resources in the justice and security sector including the police, corr

6. The President emphasized that the Strategic Roadmap for National Healing, Peacebuilding, and Reconciliation should be followed; that Palava Huts were an important part of this; and assured that the reconciliation process would not be held back by lack of funds. All involved needed to get together, coordinate action and draw up an action plan.
7. On the slow progress on justice, including the police, the Ministry of Justice would meet with the Ministry of Finance the following week to discuss budget allocations, implementation and acceleration of progress in the justice sector, in particular on police where government budget allocations would be forthcoming soon. On police reform, the President emphasized her support for promoting accountability, leadership and engagement with civilians and noted that this would be further advanced with the adoption of the Police Act which had already been submitted to the Legislature.
8. With regard to the Panel of Experts on Liberia of the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1521 (2003), the President referred to the work on a new land law and agency and confirmed the need for sustainable and transparent management of natural resources. She also conveyed that based on the New Deal principles of national ownership, she was pleased that natural resources had been removed from the Sanctions Committee's mandate, and that all of the sanctions on Liberia should be removed.
9. The Chair noted that the Peacebuilding Fund (PBF) had allocated \$1 million for work on natural resources, which would complement the actions by the World Bank and UNDP on natural resources. The President welcomed this, as she said it would help the Government develop stronger policies for the management of natural resources and help explain Liberia's position to the international community and NGOs.
10. The Chair's visit took place a week after the President had presented her annual message to the National Legislature on 27 January, in which the role and activities of NGOs had been discussed. The President now restated the position that NGOs need mechanisms of public accountability and should act responsibly in their agitation. Liberia needs partners, not policemen, and the message was not meant to undermine the role of NGOs.

Statement of Mutual Commitments

11. The Chair
took part in two meetings on the SMC review. The first discussed the status of the draft annual report for the period of October 2012 to December 2013 which was led by the Chair and attended by representatives of the Peacebuilding Office in the Ministry of Internal Affairs (MIA), the Programme Management Unit of the Ministry of Justice (MoJ), the UN

with existing government frameworks so as to avoid parallel processes. The Chair suggested that the SMC should be extended by one year, which would allow for a continued effort to achieve commitments. He requested clarity on the Government of Liberia plans with regard to the New Deal and how it would affect the Statement of Mutual Commitments. Government of Liberia stressed that they had not yet concluded consultations on the New Deal, and that the SMC should be aligned with the Agenda for Transformation.

13. With
regard to the Government's commitments under the SMC, the Chair asked for more clarity on budget allocation to the justice sector during 2012 to 2014. UNMIL pointed to the need for concerted efforts to reduce pre-trial detention rates that remained high (75%), and also urged that the Police Act be expedited. A partner country noted the need to address the issue of unused police training centres. The Minister of Finance initiated a special meeting the following week, with concerned ministries and agencies, to find a quick solution to the problems that had caused delays in police, immigration and corrections officer training.
14. On national
reconciliation, the Government would be developing a work plan for the implementation of the Roadmap. Key activities and targets for 2014 would be prepared following technical meetings which were planned for the following week. The Government had also moved forward with the communication strategy for reconciliation, the Palava Hut talks, south-south cooperation and the national symbols project. The Chair welcomed the preparation of an implementation plan that covered the different areas. He also stressed the importance of the inclusion of women in the reconciliation process.

Justice and Security

15. The Justice and Security Joint Programme needed to move at a faster pace. UNMIL had started coordination meetings with partners in the sector to clarify roles and identify gaps. Challenges remained, however, such as the lack of resources and limited implementation capacity. In discussions with UNMIL, the Chair highlighted the need for a comprehensive justice and security programme which would define the different areas of needed support in the sector and provide a clearer framework for support from partners. The DSRS (CDG) informed about the plans for a "second generation justice and security joint programme". A consultant would be hired in the coming month to work with local partners to revise the existing joint programme and look at different options for the management of the trust fund. The focus of work would be on fund management, resource mobilization strategy, clarity on the roles of partners, structural issues and project transfers. He stressed that partners were still able to contribute to this sector through bilateral funding mechanisms even if they do not participate in the Trust Fund. Concurrently, UNDP would conduct an audit of the Trust Fund.
16. The
Deputy Head of PBSO pointed out in discussions with UNMIL and government authorities that the PBF was a catalytic fund, and that it was willing to initiate projects where this would facilitate complementary investments by the Government of Liberia or other international partners.

Furthermore, the Government should take the lead in defining resource mobilization priorities, which the PBC could support.

21. At the
concluding session, the Government of Liberia emphasized the importance of people's access to justice. This was also part of mutual obligations contained in the SMC. The Chair underlined the importance of the Government's commitment to and ownership of the justice and security sector. The Deputy Head of PBSO also pointed out that the hubs were important means to fostering relations of trust and confidence between the state and its citizens. UNMIL pointed to the hubs' role in the decentralization process and the positive experiences they brought to Liberia.

Meetings with Partners

22. The Chair met with bilateral and regional partners including the Special Representative of the President of ECOWAS, Head of Mission of the European Union Delegation and the EU Member States, the Norwegian delegation visiting Liberia to assess the situation in the justice and security sector in Liberia, the Ambassador of Sweden, and the Ambassador of the United States. In some cases partners were in the process of exploring further engagements and support to Liberia. Notably, the EU will in its coming European Development Fund programming allocate a considerable share for support to the justice sector. Norway was exploring providing additional expe

29. On cross-border issues, the Minister had met with the Ambassadors of Sierra Leone,

35. The Chair visited the Land Coordination Centre in Kakata City (Margibi County) which had received 41 land dispute cases last year. Five of them had been resolved. The Centre expressed appreciation for the support from the PBF. The Centre uses alternative land dispute mechanisms which seek to find mutually acceptable resolutions without referring cases to the court system which is already overloaded. Training programmes were conducted for different groups including elders and chiefs and focused on both traditional and formal legal training. Educational outreach, information dissemination and surveys were also conducted by the Centre. Current challenges for the Centre included the division of deeds, establishing ownership of land among community group leaders, and vacated land issues including war-affected land.
36. At Sinje in Grand Cape Mount County, the Chair visited a border crossing point with Sierra Leone, followed by a visit to the Sime Darby Oil Palm and Rubber Plantation. The Chair observed the Joint Border Security premises, where offices of the Bureau of Immigration and Naturalization (BIN), the Drug Enforcement Agency (DEA), Liberia National Police (LNP), Criminal Investigation Department (CID), the National Bureau of Investigation (NBI) and the Office of National Security (ONS) were located as well as Customs and Health Control posts. The Chair also visited the Mano River Bridge crossing point,

40. The Chair also met with the management team of Sime Darby Oil Palm and Rubber in Grand Cape Mount County and shared the letter of the Malaysian Government to the Sanctions Committee dated 17 December 2013 regarding the concessions. Sime Darby emphasized the many benefits for Liberia including employment and labour opportunities, reduced migration of the labour force from rural communities. They noted that the Plantation was paying higher market rates for Plantation workers and employed a total of 2,968 workers (almost twice the number that had been originally required). Health care and schools were also provided by the management. Sime Darby did recognize some of the difficulties with communities could have been avoided, and noted that several challenges needed to be addressed including managing expectations of communities; balancing environmental concerns with development; legal rights and ownership; and managing costs and requirements.
41. Some progress on land issues was also observed. The Ministry of Lands, Mines and Energy focused on 1) coordination work with agencies on environmental issues including the EPA; 2) land exploitation; and 3) land policy issues. The Chair shared with the Deputy Minister of Lands, Mines and Energy the letter from the Sanctions Committee of 12 December 2013 which referred to issues relevant to the Ministry's work. He asked that the Ministry review the letter and share any comments or suggestions it may have. The Ministry was also preparing a concept note on guidelines for informal sectors such as artisanal mining and small and medium enterprises. Furthermore, a national consultative meeting took place in January 2014 which had discussed the importance of revenues generation from concessions but had also supported the need for civil society participation, reliable statistics and regulations on security matters. Regular meetings between the Ministry and stakeholders on the Kimberley Process recommendations had been discontinued and it was the Ministry's priority in 2014 to restart dialogue by end February. Regular consultations were expected to be completed by March, after which a roadmap would be ready for small-scale mining policies, decentralization, and the establishment of committees on regional issues and transparency. The Ministry informed the Chair of its plan to hold a "Local Government Months" which would involve a series of consultations during the month with all levels of society, which was followed by an update to the Legislature, local chiefs and other groups in the area of new concessions.
42. UNMIL
noted that a review by the Government of Liberia had concluded that 63 concessions in mining and agriculture had been granted unlawfully, adding that 29 of these concessions had recently been revoked. Demonstrations and protests had taken place on two concessions in both Grand Bassa and Bong counties. In several cases, local political leaders appeared to give false expectations to the local people. There would be a joint study by the Land Commission, the MIA and UNDP looking at community consultation and participation in land concessions. The Chair also noted in his meetings that UNDP and the World Bank were conducting a study on natural resource management.
43. The Land Commission and the MIA were conducting a study on drivers of land conflicts in communities which was expected to be completed in March. The MIA underlined that concessions should take into account the needs of the local communities. The Chair also shared the letter from the Security Council Sanctions Committee (12 December 2013P.0006h

Observations

The Chair expressed his sincere gratitude to UNMIL for the excellent arrangements and strong support extended to him before and during the visit. The Chair and the Deputy Head of PBSO made the following observations:

- The national reconciliation process needs to be expedited and implemented in a coordinated and practical manner. The INCHR needs to be strengthened and to collaborate with other principals in the process to ensure capacity for implementation and that synergies are utilized in the reconciliation process.
- Land issues and management of natural resources remain a key issue in need of support and attention from partners. The efforts of the World Bank and the UNDP should be pursued and supported as they form a basis for a possible intensification of coordinated support from partners for key institutions and reform efforts.
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