

Visit to Liberia 12-16 May 2013

Chair of the Liberia CSC of the Peacebuilding Commission

Report

Ambassador Staffan Tillander, Chair of the PBC Liberia Country Configuration, visited Liberia on May 12-16. Mr. Brian Williams, UN PBSO, has also joined the visit for matters concerning the PBF. In preparing for and throughout the visit, close dialogue was maintained with the SRSG and her staff, in line with the role of PBC as being supportive of the efforts of UNMIL and the UN country team in their support for Liberia.

The visit was specifically focused on reconciliation, land and natural resources and issues linked to PBF financing for peacebuilding. Discussions were held with different stakeholders. Possible synergies were explored in col

Minister of Planning and Economic Affairs, with the incoming Minister for Internal Affairs, Mr. Morris Dukuly, as well as with outgoing Minister for Internal Affairs, Mr. Blamoh Nelson. The Chair also met with civil society organizations, bilateral partners, international financial institutions, and the UN System. In addition, the Chair participated in the WIPNET Peace Hut celebration in Totota, a 10 year anniversary of women's involvement in the peace process. WIPNET activists from different parts of the country participated. The celebration was an interesting and useful illustration of the work of WIPNET and support to 26 such local groups by UNWomen.

I. PBC Coordination and

support to justice and security

As argued in the report from the PBC visit to Liberia in February 2013, the Agenda for Transformation (AfT) and Liberia Development Alliance provide a framework to help maximize the coordination of key stakeholders, including the Government of Liberia, bilateral partners, private sector and civil society organizations. The Agenda for Transformation also very usefully integrates peacebuilding in a broader development context and it offers an opportunity to streamline and align behind government leadership.

There is a general wish, often expressed by Government officials, to simplify coordination structures, dialogue instruments and reporting procedures. This wish should also guide the PBC in the continued efforts to align the SMC with the Agenda for Transformation and related instruments and compacts on state and peacebuilding priorities. Equally, the AfT offers an opportunity to become the

organizing structure for the continued PBF engagement, both for governance and programme planning (taking over for the Liberia Peacebuilding Programme).

The existing Justice and Security Joint Programme (.JJP) is a useful basis for a comprehensive approach to strengthening justice and security, and PBF financed interventions need to be closely integrated with such broader mechanisms in order to be effective and catalytic. There is a need to make a critical appraisal of existing mechanisms, including the .JJP, to strengthen its priority setting function, making sure that measures are weighted and sequenced also among the different sectors. For this purpose, the programme is being reviewed together with the Trust Fund and other related coordination mechanisms, including the Joint Steering Committee.

The management of the Trust Fund has been an ongoing challenge during the past year. In spite of efforts to find a solution the problems have not been adequately resolved. Serious question marks remain about management and reporting. As a result, potential partners have in some cases opted not to make a contribution. Immediate measures by UNDP are needed to rectify the situation, as well as a more sustainable longterm solution within the review of the .JJP.

The UNMIL/World Bank Public Expenditure Review of the Security Sector, recently officially published but its contents well known for the past year, offers a strong input for a comprehensive approach to priority setting and sustainability. The review of the .JJP, the PBF funded management and accountability assessment of the justice and the police and the outcome of the UNMIL Justice Workshop in the end of March, should provide a solid basis for a comprehensive strategy with benchmarks, priority setting, budgeting for recurrent costs and sustainability and an implementation plan. This would also allow for effective coordination, regular monitoring and evaluation, and resource mobilization. To get this right is essential. Building Liberian capacity to keep step with the UNMIL transition is challenging and further delays would be most unfortunate.

The discussions about the second tranche of the PBF offers a basis for continued focus on key peacebuilding priorities and the deepening of the engagement between the UN and the World Bank and the African Development Bank (AfDB). Informal discussions as well as indications from the banks about a fragility sensitive focus in their coming strategies is very w

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Informal consultations among several participants, including UNMIL and the UN Country Team, had paved the way for such progress in several areas, including the Palava Huts, the community based conflict transformation, and activities related to youth, women and girls. Especially the Palava Hut mechanism should be possible to move forward towards rapid implementation without further delay.

In terms of financing, Mr. Dukuly confirmed that the 5 million USD from this year's budget, if not spent this year, would be put in a special account and made available for the next budget year. Minister Dukuly's close engagement with the President on these issues was evident. Minister Konneh confirmed that the 5 million USD would be "re programmed" for next fiscal year and thus made available for reconciliation activities.

It continues to be important to ensure release of government funds allocated in the national budget for reconciliation activities, to clarify the role of Ambassador Weah, and to make sure there is capacity and leadership to start the reconciliation without any further delay. In addition to the History Project, other actions should start as soon as possible, while the overall coordination is maintained within the framework of the overall Road Map.

III. Land and natural resources

As consistently argued in reports from several previous visits, there is a need to focus attention on land issues associated with mining, agriculture and forestry concessions, as a potential source of conflict. The PUP issue offers a dramatic example and also illustrates the importance of taking action to stop violation of laws and bringing those guilty to the courts.

A broad range of international partners are already deeply involved in various aspects of capacity building in this area, and intensified cooperation would seem useful to ensure close support to and engagement with the Government at different levels, as well as with civil society organizations.

Challenges in this area were analysed in a conference organized by civil society and with the participation of Government representatives, the African Union, the UN, bilateral partners and business. The various national policies and laws were presented, including ongoing efforts to strengthen the legal framework. The conference offered an opportunity for informal engagement among participants from civil society and government.

At the conference, the Liberian Land Commission presented ongoing efforts to formulate a land policy and design a new Land Rights Law. The importance of implementation of laws was also highlighted and the shortcoming in government capacity was pointed out as well as difficulties in living up to ambitions on local content and development. Sustained political will and resources would be necessary, but even so, full implementation would take 10-20 years. Communities'

