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Peacebuilding Commission

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Liberia configuration

Summary record of the 1st meeting

Held at Headquarters, New York, on Monday, 15 November 2010, at 9.30 a.m.

Chairperson: Prince Zeid Al-Hussein (Jordan)

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The meeting was called to order at 9.45 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda (PBC/4/LBR/1)

1. *The agenda was adopted.*

Statement of mutual commitments (PBC/4/LBR/L.1)

2. **The Chairperson**, speaking via video link from Monrovia, said he hoped that the first formal meeting of the country-specific configuration on Liberia would constitute the start of a dynamic partnership with the configuration's partners in Liberia, since such collaboration would be vital for the success of its work.

3. The draft statement of mutual commitments on peacebuilding in Liberia (PBC/4/LBR/L.1) represented the instrument of engagement between the Commission and the Government of Liberia, based on the priorities identified by the Government, which had played a leading role in its preparation. It also reflected the findings of the Commission's recent mission to Liberia and input by members of the Commission and other United Nations bodies. He took it that the members of the Liberia configuration wished to adopt the draft statement of mutual commitments on peacebuilding in Liberia.

4. *It was so decided.*

5. **Ms. Johnson-Sirleaf** (President of Liberia), speaking via video link from Monrovia, said that the speed with which the Commission had begun its engagement with the Liberian Government following the country's request to be placed on its agenda was unprecedented. She was deeply grateful to all stakeholders for their enthusiasm and support.

6. Since taking office in 2006, her Government had worked to ensure a peaceful, secure and democratic nation and had introduced policies to foster peace, accelerate reconstruction and development, and build a strong governance system. It had identified the need to promote national reconciliation through dialogue across geographical and ethnic divides; to create institutions, legal frameworks and processes; and to adopt measures for improving the security and socio-economic well-being of all Liberians. It had also taken steps to address the six key conflict factors identified in its Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper for 2008-2011, namely weak and dysfunctional justice systems; land conflicts, management of natural resources, the condition of youth, especially with

regard to employment; political polarization; and the relationship between the State and its citizens.

7. In 2008, after submitting a Priority Plan to address critical peacebuilding gaps, Liberia had received US\$ 15 million under the Peacebuilding Fund's Immediate Response Facility. Those funds had been allocated to fostering national reconciliation and conflict management, promoting peace and resolving conflict, and strengthening State capacity for peace consolidation. Another US\$ 1.7 million had also been received for two emergency projects to address root causes and potential areas of conflict by allowing the establishment of institutions such as the Anti-Corruption Commission and the Land Commission, among others. According to a recent independent midterm evaluation of the Peacebuilding Fund in Liberia, significant progress had been made in addressing the pervasive conflict issues in Liberian society, and it had been recommended that Liberia should receive a second tranche of funding from the Fund.

8. The endorsement of the statement of mutual commitments on peacebuilding in Liberia by the members of the configuration and the Liberian Government represented another critical milestone in Liberia's progress towards long-term peace, stability and development. Her Government, and the Liberian people, were committed to fulfilling their obligations as set out in that statement, which articulated the priority actions to be taken in three key areas, namely strengthening the rule of law, supporting security sector reform and promoting national reconciliation. She was convinced that the Commission would fulfil its own commitments and that the international community, including the African Union, the Economic Community of West African States and the Mano River Union countries, would also continue to support Liberia.

9. Work had recently begun on the first of five regional hubs that would not only provide modern infrastructure and accommodation for the Liberia National Police, the Bureau of Immigration and Naturalization and other security institutions, but would also give rural populations in Liberia access to justice and security. The Liberian Government was aware of the need to make budgetary allocations to keep the hubs functioning far beyond the timescale of the Peacebuilding Fund's engagement.

10. The Liberian Priority Plan now close to completion was crucial for establishing a framework to implement the priority actions set out in the statement of mutual commitments and for setting in place a monitoring and evaluation framework to measure progress over time. It was important that the Plan should build on the existing programme aimed at strengthening institutional and human capacities to manage conflicts and enhance local initiatives for peace. The Liberian people were determined to forget the past, achieve reconciliation and build a vibrant nation; she was therefore optimistic that peace, which was indispensable for the country's transformation and development, would be irreversible.

11. Peacebuilding in Liberia also involved meeting basic human needs; in that connection, creating livelihood opportunities for young people remained a major challenge for her Government. However, she was convinced that, with concerted efforts, commitment and dedication, the difficulties that lay ahead could be overcome.

12. **The Chairperson** said it was clear from the President's remarks that, despite the remarkable progress achieved, Liberia now needed further support for its continued peace consolidation. On behalf of the members of the configuration, he pledged dedicated support to the country in realizing that objective.

13. **Ms. Løj** (Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Liberia), speaking via video link from Monrovia, said she was confident that the rapid progress achieved by the Liberia configuration to date would further help to build and sustain peace in the country. She also welcomed the Liberian Government's commitment to playing a leadership role in the peacebuilding process, as demonstrated by the presence of its President at the current meeting.

14. Liberia was the first country on the Commission's agenda which also had a United Nations peacekeeping operation on the ground; that gave the Organization a unique opportunity to support the Liberian Government simultaneously in its peacekeeping and peacebuilding efforts, which were two sides of the same coin. The United Nations Mission in Liberia and the Commission had already formed a close working relationship to support the Liberian reform agenda and the Government's identified priorities, which were also crucial for the implementation of the Mission's mandate. With support from the Commission in those

areas, the Mission would be able to make further progress in the transition planning process and the Liberian Government would be enabled to assume responsibility for the safety and security of its citizens under the rule of law, which was essential for the country's economic growth and sustainable development.

15. The start of work on the first regional hub for justice and security showed the speed with which the United Nations was able to operate when it delivered as one, and demonstrated the Commission's ability to provide an innovative response to the pressing needs identified by the Liberian Government. The challenge now was to keep up the momentum and ensure that concrete progress continued to be made. The United Nations would be judged by its actions and its ability to support the Liberian Government in achieving its peacebuilding priorities, which, if fully implemented, would pave the way for sustainable peace in Liberia.

16. **Ms. Cheng-Hopkins** (Assistant Secretary-General for Peacebuilding Support), speaking via video link from Monrovia, said that in view of the need to lower transaction costs, cut timings and eliminate unnecessary processes in order to be effective in Liberia, the Commission's engagement with Liberia had been innovative in a number of ways. First, its Chairperson had sent a delegation to the country early in the process in order to help develop the Liberian Priority Plan. Secondly, an innovative statement of mutual commitments that established clear expectations and required no lengthy drafting process had been prepared. Thirdly, in response to the 2010 review of the United Nations peacebuilding architecture, which had suggested that operations were too "New York-centric", it had been decided that the Chairperson of the Liberia configuration should chair its first formal meeting from Monrovia. It was to be hoped that many more meetings of the configuration would be chaired from Liberia, since that facilitated interaction with problem-solvers on the ground. Fourthly, the statement of mutual commitments was closely aligned with the Priority Plan, which would serve as the basis for the Peacebuilding Fund's intervention, in line with the recommendation of the 2010 review that there should be stronger synergy between the Commission and the Fund. Lastly, although the preparation of priority plans was usually quite time-consuming, owing to the participatory approach taken, the clarity with which the Liberian Government had set out its peacebuilding

priorities had accelerated the process; that had enabled the Peacebuilding Fund to proceed with the immediate disbursement of US\$ 3 million, which had been approved within days of the proposal being submitted.

17. **The Chairperson** said that the innovative approach described would help to generate the necessary momentum to tackle the critical peacebuilding priorities identified in the statement of mutual commitments. The next steps would be critical for consolidating peace in Liberia and meeting the expectations of its people. The Commission would continue to work together with the Liberian Government and all local and international stakeholders to build a self-sustaining and irreversible peace in Liberia.

The meeting rose at 10.15 a.m.