

**Visit of the Peacebuilding Commission to Liberia
11 – 15 February 2013**

Visit Report

H.E. Ambassador Staffan Tillander, Chair of the PBC Liberia Country Configuration, led a PBC visit to Liberia from 11-15 February. This visit was the first part of a joint PBC visit to Liberia and Sierra Leone. In Liberia, the PBC delegation was composed of H.E. Mr. Guillermo Rishchynski, Permanent Representative of Canada to the UN and Chair of the PBC Sierra Leone Configuration, H.E. Mr. Abdullah Al-Askar, Ambassador of Kuwait to Gabon, H.E. Mr. Jun Yamazaki, Ambassador at the Japan Permanent Mission to the UN, H.E. Mr. Mustafizur Rahman, Deputy Permanent Representative of Bangladesh to the UN, H.E. Mr. David Gordon Macleod, Charge d'Affaires a.i., British Political Office in Liberia, Ms. Gunnvor Berge, Senior Adviser, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Norway, Mr. George Patten, Minister Counsellor, Permanent Mission of Liberia to the UN, Mr. Emil Stojanovski, First Secretary, Permanent Mission of Australia to the UN and Mr. Patrick Travers, Advisor, Permanent Mission of the United Kingdom to the UN. The Chair and his staff have other critical areas of focus, such as land rights and the management of natural resources. The delegation also explored ways in which to enhance financial support, strengthen coordination and maximize synergies for peacebuilding purposes in collaboration with the UN system, the International Financial Institutions, bilateral partners at the visit, the Chair maintained dialogue with the SRSG and her staff. The Chair sees his role as well as members of the Configuration as being supportive and backstopping as appropriate. He intends to continue to maintain close contact with the SRSG as well as her Deputies.

During his visit, the delegation met with H.E. Madam Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, President of the Republic of Liberia, H.E. Cllr. Christina Tah, Minister of Justice, H.E. Ms. Julia Duncan Cassell, Minister of Gender and Development, H.E. Mr. Amara Konneh, Minister of Finance and Acting Minister of Planning and Economic Affairs, H.E. Blamoh Nelson, Minister of Internal Affairs, among other Governmental officials. The delegation also met with civil society organizations, political parties, bilateral partners, international financial institutions, and the UN System. In addition, the delegation participated in the official launch of the first Regional Justice and Security Hub, in Gbarnga, Bong County. A full programme of the visit is attached to this report.

I. Rule of Law

Regional Justice and Security Hubs:

On 12 February, the delegation participated in the inauguration of the first Regional Justice and Security hub in Gbarnga, Bong county, celebrating the near completion of most buildings and the provision of a series of services, including public outreach, within the scope of this PBF funded project. The Gbarnga Hub is expected to provide justice and security services to three counties, including Bong, Lofa and Nimba counties.

The hub concept is a manifestation of one of the centre pieces of peacebuilding in Liberia. As expressed in the Government's National Vision for 2030, the purpose is to "...increase equitable access to justice and to strengthen the rule of law for the social and economic benefit of all Liberians". As stated by H.E. President Johnson Sirleaf at the launch ceremony: "The opening of this first hub, in the nation's heartland, is confirmation that we mean what we say about decentralizing services to all parts of this country, and that Monrovia is not Liberia. The decentralization of governmental services to the people is a mark of good governance. The presence of this hub, and the others to follow, will ensure access to justice and to quality security service for all Liberians."

It is now of great importance to get the implementation of the hub concept right, with a focus on quick delivery of services on the ground, to the counties and local communities affected. To be possible and successful, the Justice and Security Hubs must be seen in a broader framework of building capacity in justice and security.

The effective functioning of the Gbarnga hub should imply that an individual can address a complaint to a justice or security institution present in their vicinity, making access to justice and security a palpable reality. A public service office, established as part of the hub, will make efforts to reach out and provide information on how citizens can use the different services in the three counties. For someone whose rights have been violated, a human rights monitor from the Independent National Human Rights Commission (INCHR) will be available. On gender based violence, women and children affected can feel confident that

delay. The police law is now being elaborated, under an ambitious time line, and its finalization will be important, including ensuring civilian oversight, complaints mechanisms, appointments and guaranteeing the professionalization of the police

of 2012 will be strengthened. PBC will continue to follow issues linked to land conflicts and the opportunities it offers as well as the risks it pose to the peacebuilding process in the country. The PBC should be open to further actions and support in this critical area.

International Political Forum:

The suggestions for an “international political forum” at the last meeting of the PBC Liberia Configuration, was discussed with the SRSG and partners. It was agreed that in connection with the Chair’s next visit to Liberia a forum will be convened, inviting representatives from the Embassies present in or accredited to Liberia.

Regional Cooperation:

The need for strengthened regional cooperation was pointed out in various contexts. The regional approach taken by the African Development Bank, through which it supports infrastructure and energy projects across borders and throughout the region, is of particular interest. In addition, the AfDB in Freetown has initiated specific support to the Mano River Union (MRU). In this context, the possibility of a joint meeting of the three PBC Configurations in West Africa with the MRU was discussed.