

Chairman's Summary
Sierra Leone Country-Specific Meeting
Peacebuilding Commission
12 October 2006

Upon requests by the Government of Sierra Leone and the Security Council, the Organizational Committee on 23 June 2006 selected Sierra Leone to be one of the first countries to be considered by the Peacebuilding Commission.

The Government of Sierra Leone and participants in the meeting highlighted the important achievements made in restoring peace and stability in the country and promoting post-conflict recovery. These achievements include steady economic growth, the holding of free and fair elections in 2002, the reestablishment of state authority, and the establishment of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) and the Special Court.

Participants noted with satisfaction that the government has developed a Poverty Reduction Strategy which was endorsed in 2005. It was also noted that the government has initiated reforms in various sectors including in the governance and security fields. The participants noted in particular that the government strategic development frameworks, including the peace consolidation strategy, were developed through comprehensive participatory processes involving civil society and other stakeholders.

Participants reinforced the Government's view of the specific critical challenges that impede the consolidation of peace, which will need to be addressed urgently to help lay the foundations for sustainable peace and create the enabling environment for development and reconstruction. These critical challenges are summarized as follows:

Social and youth empowerment and employment. Youth marginalization and disempowerment is deep and widespread. The government has recognized this as a critical peace building issue that requires urgent action. While unemployment is important, other forms of political, social and economic exclusion also require urgent attention. Women's empowerment requires urgent action. Supporting government efforts to improve educational facilities to increase youth employability, including for young women, the living conditions of youth as well as their meaningful participation in the political and development process is a high priority. This also implies supporting an enabling environment for private sector development, increasing economic growth, trade and investment and improving public services to facilitate job creation and employment.

Consolidating democracy and good governance. As stated in the final report of the TRC, the war in Sierra Leone was largely the result of failures in governance and institutional processes in the country. The strengthening of the democratic institutions of governance is an important pre-requisite for sustainable peace and development, particularly building capacity of governing institutions, such as Parliament and the National Electoral Commission. The upcoming electoral process will test the strength of institutions and democratic principles in the country. The successful holding of this

second post-conflict election will be a critical step forward in consolidating peace. This priority area includes devolving authority through decentralization, building the capacity and professionalization of the civil service, strengthening administrative capacities; creating the institutional and regulatory framework to ensure transparency and to fight against corruption; the effective management of the economy and natural resources, and the other priorities outlined in the Improved Governance and Accountability Pact.

Justice and security sector reform. All participants agreed on the need to pursue the ongoing national efforts to strengthen the justice system and the fair administration of justice. They also noted that the security sector, police and army in particular, is in need of further sustained reforms. Participants welcomed the government commitment to implement the recommendations of the TRC which require further action by the government and support from the international community.

Capacity building. Building the capacity of the State to perform its functions and deliver social services is key to laying the foundations for peace and sustainable development. Sierra Leone is in the process of rebuilding the state to extend the jurisdiction of an accountable, transparent and effective administration throughout the country. This will require building on ongoing efforts and sustained international assistance.

Participants called on the international community to engage with Sierra Leone. The participants called for donors to increase their support to national efforts to coordinate the mobilization of external resources with a view to building public trust and credibility in national institutions through the integration of external resources within a national development framework and budget, and to ensure that their assistance is in line with national priorities.

Sierra Leone was declared eligible to benefit from the Peacebuilding Fund, and was invited to initiate consultations with the UN Country Team on accessing these funds as described in the Fund's terms of reference.

Members of the Peacebuilding Commission invite the Government of Sierra Leone to move forward, with support from the United Nations system and other partners, on strategies and plans for addressing the critical peacebuilding issues identified above, based on comprehensive analysis and a mapping of existing activities. The Commission notes that the existing coordination mechanisms should be enhanced to take into account the work of the peacebuilding Commission. The Commission invites the Government of Sierra Leone to present an outline of these strategies and plans at the next meeting of the country-specific meeting on Sierra Leone.

Members of the Peacebuilding Commission call upon the international community to sustain its political and financial support to Sierra Leone, and encourage the UN, World Bank, IMF and other donors to ensure that the allocation of resources and the activities undertaken reflect the peacebuilding priorities identified above and government initiatives, including through the PRSP. The Commission calls upon all the relevant actors to enhance their coordination to maximize resources in support of Sierra Leone's peacebuilding priorities. The Commission further noted the extent to which regional stability affects progress in Sierra Leone.

Today's meeting represents the first in a series of meetings, with the second taking place before the end of the year. In between formal meetings, the Commission agreed to devote time to informal working meetings to work with the Government of Sierra Leone on the areas where the Peacebuilding Commission can add value.