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Sixty-ninth year

Provisional

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New York

<i>President:</i>	Mr. Quinlan	(Australia)
<i>Members:</i>	Argentina	Mrs. Perceval
	Chad	Mr. Makadjibeye
	Chile	Mr. Olguín Cigarroa
	China	Mr. Yong Zhao
	France	Mr. Bertoux
	Jordan	Mrs. Kawar
	Lithuania	Mrs. Jakubonė
	Luxembourg	Ms. Lucas
	Nigeria	Mr. Laro
	Republic of Korea	Ms. Paik Ji-ah
	Russian Federation	Mr. Iliichev
	Rwanda	Mr. Nduhungirehe
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland ...	Mr. Wilson
	United States of America	Ms. Power

Agenda

The situation in Liberia

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The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation in Liberia

The President: In accordance with rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the representative of Liberia to participate in this meeting.

In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite Mr. Hervé Ladsous, Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations, to participate in this meeting.

In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite His Excellency Mr. Per Thöresson, representative of the Chair of the Liberia configuration of the Peacebuilding Commission and Deputy Permanent Representative of Sweden here in New York, to participate in this meeting.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

I give the floor to Mr. Ladsous.

Mr. Ladsous: I wish to begin by expressing my deep appreciation for the Security Council's efforts to mobilize support to defeat the Ebola epidemic, which, as we all know, has had serious political, security and social effects on all of the countries affected.

A month ago, I had the opportunity to brief the Council on the implications for peace and security of the Ebola crisis (see S/PV.7279). While I spoke then to the political and security ramifications of the health emergency for all the countries in West Africa where we have peacekeeping operations deployed, including Mali and Côte d'Ivoire, my focus was nevertheless on Liberia, the country most affected by Ebola. Today, I will again focus on Liberia, but I will attempt to look beyond the immediate health crisis to what we, as an international community deeply committed to that country, can continue to do in order to keep its longer-term interests in our sights.

There have been several significant developments in the past month. In early October, the President accepted the resignation of her Minister of Justice, Ms. Christiana Tah, after more than five years of service. In departing, Ms. Tah publicly claimed that she had been thwarted in her efforts to carry out her responsibility for steering

the national security institutions that come under her Ministry's authority. A few days ago, the Independent National Commission on Human Rights released a report challenging the findings of a board of inquiry on the army's actions while it was enforcing the quarantine of an Ebola-affected community in Monrovia. Five soldiers were found guilty of disciplinary offences related to the incident and have been demoted and sentenced to be kept in custody, but the question of criminal prosecution remains.

Following direction from the President and the legislature, the national body responsible for elections has held consultations with various stakeholders on how to proceed with the senatorial elections that under normal circumstances would have been held on 14 October. Many in civil society have raised serious concerns about the appropriateness of proceeding with senatorial elections, while the electoral body has recommended to the legislature that they be held on 16 December. That is currently under consideration. Yesterday, the 90-day state of emergency imposed by the President in response to the health emergency expired, and the legislature is discussing its possible extension.

Last month, I spoke about our fear that reversals could be triggered by the Ebola crisis. The Council is familiar with the challenges facing Liberia, and they have been exacerbated by the health emergency. The political and social divisions in Liberia are deepening, the already weak national institutions are looking increasingly vulnerable, and in the current circumstances the very survival of the country's economically most vulnerable people is at risk. As I said last month, even the small dignities of our shared humanity, the ability to touch and comfort loved ones, have all disappeared in the context of Ebola.

However, in the midst of this serious crisis there is some good news. We are no longer seeing signs that security could seriously deteriorate further, which, the Council will recall, was our fear in late August and early September. And while the crisis has put unprecedented pressure on public institutions to perform, and it is true that they have not always been successful, some areas of strength have also been demonstrated. For instance, local officials have responded to challenges at their level in a manner we had not seen before, offering a unique opportunity for decentralizing services. Furthermore, the fact that the national human rights commission demanded accountability for the actions

of the security forces at West Point has created an important opportunity to enhance democratic oversight of the security forces. Those are goals we have been working on for years, goals that we had observed there was a worrying lack of urgency to achieve.

For Liberia, this is clearly a moment of national tragedy. As the Minister of Defence told the Council in September, the very existence of the nation is at stake. But even at such a difficult juncture, there is an opportunity to mobilize the urgency required for transformation. And we must encourage the people and Government of Liberia to seize that opportunity, not only to address the immediate crisis but also to rebuild the country after Ebola. The people of Liberia have demonstrated considerable resilience throughout the Ebola crisis, and we are impressed by their strength. We must provide them with whatever assistance we can, and consider how best we can support not only the Ebola response, but also, and perhaps most critically, the post-Ebola reconstruction effort that will be required.

In August, the Secretary-General made a series of recommendations (see S/2014/598) on how the United Nations could revise its engagement in Liberia, including with respect to enhancing the political role of the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) and drawing down its uniformed presence. In the current circumstances, we are of the view that it would be appropriate to extend UNMIL's mandate until September 2015, while taking forward the set of recommendations on political issues and deferring consideration of the drawdown of troops and police until such time as the appropriate health authorities inform us that the Ebola crisis is over.

As a representative of the international community, we must seize the current moment and see how best we may collectively help to transform it into one that is positively catalytic for the country. As the Secretary-General put it in his report in August, we may have to reimagine our engagement in Liberia. Even as the international community scales up its response to the immediate challenge of defeating Ebola, we must also consider how we may collectively support the rebuilding of Liberia in the wake of the disease.

The President: I thank Mr. Ladsous for his briefing.

I now give the floor to the representative of the Chair of the Liberia configuration of the Peacebuilding Commission.

Mr. Thöresson: I would like to begin by expressing my deepest condolences to the families and friends of all those who have perished in the Ebola epidemic. I would like to commend the Government of Liberia and all Liberians for their resilience and determination, and I pay tribute to the many brave health-care workers engaged in the medical response. I would also like to express my appreciation for the support provided by the United Nations and other international partners. While there seem to be some encouraging signs, it is far too early for the international community to lower its guard. Continued attention and massive efforts are still needed.

On 3 November, the Peacebuilding Commission (PBC) country configurations of Guinea, Sierra Leone and Liberia held a second joint meeting on the Ebola crisis. The joint format of the meetings underlines the importance of the regional dimension of the crisis, and the need for continued close regional cooperation. Lessons should be drawn from the regional approach in the international response to Ebola so that we may also enhance regional coordination in our support for peacebuilding.

At that joint meeting, we identified three priority areas for the PBC. The first is delivering on commitments. We should urge that the generous commitments and pledges made to the global Ebola response be translated into action on the ground as quickly as possible, and that a strong international presence remain to facilitate effective delivery of that support.

Secondly, we should address immediate peacebuilding needs. A comprehensive approach that meets the broader security, developmental and governance challenges alongside the medical public-health response is critical. One example, which we highlighted previously in our statement to the Council in September (see S/PV.7260), is the time-dependent urgency of addressing the capability and mobility gaps of the Liberia National Police. Efforts to ensure the rule of law and the protection of civilians, as well as confidence-building measures aimed at preventing further social unrest, should also be encouraged and supported.

Thirdly, we should prepare for the medium term. We must begin planning for enhanced and accelerated peacebuilding support in the immediate aftermath of the crisis now, not least because of the severe impact

the epidemic has had on the economy, which will have consequences for Liberia's ability to implement its commitments. The PBC will therefore request the Secretary-General to make a comprehensive assessment of Ebola's impact on peacebuilding priorities, including with recommendations for focused and effective international support.

Considering the importance of the economic dimension to this crisis, we had invited senior representatives from the World Bank to our meeting last week to provide an assessment of the economic impact. According to the World Bank, the two-year regional financial impact could reach \$32.6 billion by the end of 2015. The World Bank also indicated that Liberia's revised 2014-2015 budget has an unmet financing gap of more than half of the budget deficit projected at over \$300 million. A recent assessment by the United Nations Development Programme points to the negative impact on domestic revenue generation and increased pressures on State expenditures.

As the Permanent Representative of Liberia, Ambassador Kamara, stated at our meeting last week, tensions will be rising and public confidence will be eroding as the gaps between the expectations of the people and the capacity of the Government to deliver grow wider. Social cohesion in Liberian society is being tested by this crisis, with increasing risks for disorder and political instability. As partners, we should help counter these risks, including by supporting efforts to improve State-society relations. Full transparency in the implementation of our support will be one important factor to help restore public confidence. As we have stated before, it is the Ebola virus that should be isolated, not the countries affected. Strengthening international and regional cooperation will continue to be vital to ease the burden of the crisis. We must help create the necessary conditions and advocate for businesses to return to Liberia. Suspended flights to Liberia should resume to facilitate this cooperation.

Due to the increasing risks for instability and the continued need for effective delivery of support, there is great need to maintain strong international presence in Liberia. The decision to extend the mandate of the United Nations Mission in Liberia is therefore welcomed. We must also ensure that no gaps are left when the drawdown of the Mission eventually resumes, not least in view of the upcoming presidential and parliamentary elections. A new approach to international development

cooperation may be needed to ensure that support is effective and contributing to sustainable results.

The PBC will continue to apply available peacebuilding instruments flexibly, adapting to evolving needs. The Statement of Mutual Commitments, with targets on strengthening the rule of law, supporting security sector reform and promoting national reconciliation, will have to be reviewed and updated. The Peacebuilding Fund-supported projects currently being implemented in Liberia should also be calibrated and tailored to meet the needs in the current situation. The requested assessment from the Secretary-General on the impact of Ebola on peacebuilding will in this regard be a critical input to our continued efforts.

The President: I thank Mr. Thöresson for his briefing.

I now give the floor to the representative of Liberia.

Ms. Kamara (Liberia): I congratulate you, Mr. President, on your assumption of the presidency of the Council for this month. I also extend to you and to the other members of the Council the deep appreciation of my President, the Government and the people of Liberia for the steadfast support that the Council has given to Liberia over the years and for its continued engagement with Liberia.

I thank the previous speakers, Mr. Ladsous and the representative of Ambassador Grunditz, for sharing their perspectives with us.

The last couple of months have been critical for Liberia. The outbreak of the Ebola disease and its rapid spread presented multiple challenges to the country. The devastating effects of the disease are very present. The World Bank recently gave a gloomy depiction of the economic effects of the disease on the three most affected countries — Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone. With budget shortfalls and a projected negative domestic revenue generating capacity, the Government's ability to meet its responsibility to the Liberian people remains greatly hampered.

Agricultural activities continue to suffer. In many locations, marketplaces remain closed and access to basic food items especially for rural communities is constrained. Schools remain closed, greatly undermining efforts to rebuild and strengthen the educational system. Needless to say, peacebuilding activities have also been disrupted.

The state of emergency declared by President Sirleaf three months ago has expired. During the emergency, certain rights enjoyed by the Liberian people under the Constitution were suspended. Consequently, the Government could not conduct the senatorial election in October, intended to replace 15 Senators whose tenure will expire early next year. The new date for the elections, 16 December, was set by the legislature yesterday. It is hoped that conditions in the country will have improved significantly to permit the smooth conduct of elections next month.

Reports are now emerging that the spread of the disease may be declining in Liberia. This is, of course, a welcome development for the Government and people of Liberia, indeed for the global community. But caution must be exercised so as not to induce complacency in the fight against the disease. The disease is unpredictable and one infection can have a cascading effect. The expiry of the state of emergency means the restoration of certain freedoms, including the freedom of movement and assembly. As people move and interact, the likelihood of the virus resurfacing in areas thought to be under control remains high. The Government of Liberia is committed to continuing its vigilance, including collaboration with the other affected countries. At the same time, the Government is already reflecting on the initial steps that must be taken to begin early recovery. The continued robust and coordinated support of the international community at the regional and global levels is also essential for the success of this fight. This effort embodies the imperative for commitments and pledges to be fulfilled.

Without underestimating the resilience of the Liberian people in the face of this pandemic, we must acknowledge that the scaled-up international assistance has been indispensable to the progress made so far in containing the disease in Liberia. I wish, therefore, again to thank the Secretary-General, the Security Council, the President of the General Assembly and the entire membership of the United Nations for the support which Liberia is receiving. I also commend the leadership of our continental and regional organizations, the Africa Union and the Economic Community of West African States for their strong support in mitigating the effects of the disease.

Almost three months ago, the Security Council convened (see S/PV.7263) to consider the twenty-eighth report of the Secretary-General on the activities of the United Nations Mission in Liberia

(S/2014/598). Appreciating the magnitude of the Ebola crisis, the Council, in its wisdom, decided to suspend consideration of the recommendation contained in the report and approved a three-month technical rollover of the mandate of United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL). That was a significant decision, and another demonstration of the Council's commitment to its Charter obligation to maintain international peace and security. The decision implicitly recognized that the disease had the potential to undermine the gains made by UNMIL in stabilizing the security situation in Liberia. The withdrawal of peacekeepers from the country at that critical juncture would have had a serious psychological consequence on our people. It would have sent an unintended message that the country was being isolated and not the disease. A strong international presence in the country was important then and it remains a critical stabilizing factor in a situation where the social, political and economic environment is fluid and delicate.

As difficult as it has been for members of the Mission to remain in Liberia with the disease causing havoc around them, police- and troop-contributing countries have shown their commitment, not only to the Mission but also to the core values of peacekeeping, by assisting Liberia in preserving national stability. They deserve special commendation. We appeal to them to stay the course in Liberia. I thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Ms. Karin Landgren, for her personal support and engagement, and pay tribute to the peacekeepers and police units for their courage and strong sense of duty. In a sombre reflection, I again extend, on behalf of the Government and the people of Liberia, and in my own name, profound condolences to the families of two UNMIL staff members who lost their lives due to Ebola.

My Government believes that the situation has not ameliorated sufficiently to withstand drastic changes that could affect the prevailing equilibrium in regard to peace, security and social cohesion. From a cursory assessment of the impact it is evident that the disease has accentuated fragilities and vulnerabilities, which have the potential to trigger violence if not adequately addressed. Unemployment, especially among the youth, is being exacerbated by the suspension of business operations in the private sector. Public confidence will continue to erode in the coming months if financial constraints further impede service delivery. A major problem revolving around the means of livelihood can already be foreseen, underscoring the need for social

safety nets to assist acutely vulnerable groups, such as orphaned children and widows.

The success achieved in the fight against the disease needs to be monitored both in the short and long term, as the political and social environments in Liberia remain vulnerable to shocks. It is our hope that, in its deliberations, the Council will bear in mind the incessant and unrelenting threat posed by the virus, including the threat to the peace and security of the country and to social cohesion.

As we are all aware, peacekeeping missions, such as UNMIL, have valuable assets — human and material. We believe that the UNMIL assets would make a difference if deployed to complement the efforts of the Government, the United Nations Mission for Ebola Emergency Response and partners to strengthen the response to the virus.

In this light, my Government appeals to the Council to extend the mandate of UNMIL for the full one-year period and to defer further any consideration of the recommendations in the Secretary-General's twenty-eighth progress report pertaining to the reconfiguration of the Mission. We humbly suggest that a declaration by the World Health Organization that Liberia is Ebola-free should provide an opportunity for the Council to authorize a comprehensive assessment of the conditions on the ground. As was the case in the past, the outcome of such an assessment would guide further action by the Council.

The President: There are no more names inscribed on the list of speakers. I now invite Council members to informal consultations to continue our discussion on the subject.

The meeting rose at 10.30 a.m.