



Security Council

Sixty-ninth year

Provisional

7260th meeting

Tuesday, 9 September 2014, 10 a.m.

New York

President: Ms. Power (United States of America)

<i>Members:</i>	Argentina	Mr. Oyarzábal
	Australia	Mr. Bliss
	Chad	Mr. Bante
	Chile	Mr. Barros Melet
	China	Mr. Wang Min
	France	Mr. Delattre
	Jordan	Mrs. Kawar
	Lithuania	Ms. Budreckaitė
	Luxembourg.	Ms. Lucas
	Nigeria.	Mrs. Ogwu
	Republic of Korea	Mr. Oh Joon
	Russian Federation.	Mr. Ilichev
	Rwanda	Mr. Nduhungirehe
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Mr. Wilson

Agenda

The situation in Liberia

Twenty-eighth progress report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Mission in Liberia (S/2014/598)

Letter dated 28 August 2014 from the Secretary-General addressed to the President of the Security Council (S/2014/644)

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14-52880 (E)



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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

Twenty-eighth progress report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Mission in Liberia (S/2014/598)

Letter dated 28 August 2014 from the Secretary-General addressed to the President of the Security Council (S/2014/644)

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.

On behalf of the Council, I welcome His Excellency Mr. Brownie J. Samukai, Minister of National Defense of Liberia.

In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite Ms. Karin Landgren, Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Mission in Liberia, to participate in this meeting.

In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite His Excellency Mr. Mårten Grunditz, Chair of the Liberia configuration of the Peacebuilding Commission and Permanent Representative of Sweden, to participate in this meeting.

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

I wish to draw the attention of Council members to document S/2014/598, which contains the twenty-eighth progress report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Mission in Liberia. I also wish to draw the attention of Council members to document S/2014/644, which contains a letter dated 28 August 2014 from the Secretary-General addressed to the President of the Security Council.

I now give the floor to Ms. Landgren.

Ms. Landgren: The report of the Secretary-General on Liberia (S/2014/598) that is before the Council has been overtaken by the Ebola virus disease (EVD) epidemic. Liberians are facing their gravest threat since the war and my remarks will focus on that.

The spread of the EVD in Liberia has been merciless. The Ministry of Health puts the number of reported cases above 2,070, with over 1,200 deaths, but these numbers understate Ebola's true toll. The speed and scale of the loss of lives and the economic, social, political and security reverberations of the crisis are affecting Liberia profoundly.

Unlike an earthquake or a flood, this crisis grows exponentially, with every fresh infection begetting others. Caring for the sick and burying the dead are traditions now freighted with risk. The Liberian health system was the region's weakest, despite a decade of partnership efforts; now, at least 160 health workers have contracted the disease and 80 have died. Most health workers have gone long stretches without proper protective equipment, training or pay. Local funeral rites that involve the touching and washing of the dead have led to countless new deaths and will need to be replaced with safer rituals, requiring the commitment of religious and traditional leaders. Many communities denied that Ebola existed at all.

There is no real disagreement among health experts about what needs to be done. Advocacy and community mobilization, the prompt removal of suspected EVD cases from communities to case management centres, the urgent and safe disposal of bodies, and robust contact tracing and active case search are the main elements. That does require going community to community — and even door to door — to inquire, inform and support. It requires health workers to staff Ebola case management centres, while employing meticulous infection control measures.

For now, patients at advanced stages of EVD continue to be brought to facilities that cannot admit them. Four new case management centres will be established in Monrovia, adding some 500 beds in the capital alone, but even this may not fully respond to the needs. We will know this epidemic is being outrun when we find that there is spare bed capacity.

By late July, the EVD outbreak had triggered widespread alarm and the Government took several measures. Borders were closed, other than at a few strictly controlled crossing points; non-essential Government workers were sent on mandatory leave; and most Government travel was restricted. Border markets, schools and other institutions were ordered to close, and large gatherings were suspended. But Ebola's spread outpaced the Government's ability to respond.

In several instances, public anger broke out over the failure to remove the bodies of EVD victims from streets and houses.

On 6 August, President Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf declared a 90-day state of emergency, stating that the scale and scope of the epidemic exceeded the response capacity of national institutions and existing legal frameworks. Extraordinary measures were required, the President said, including the suspension of some constitutionally guaranteed rights. The legislature endorsed the decision, as required by the Constitution.

Later in the month, a curfew was instituted from 9 p.m. to 6 a.m., since yesterday pushed back to 11 p.m. Within the context of the state of emergency, the narrow domestic role of the Armed Forces of Liberia (AFL) was broadened and the army deployed, along with the National Police and the Immigration Service, to isolate highly Ebola-affected counties and communities and to protect the less-affected counties. The benefits of isolating Ebola-affected communities to prevent disease transmission are not clear. Those operations, to date, have not always included prior arrangements to make available food and water, or sufficient supportive engagement with the communities concerned.

On 20 August, when the Government mounted an AFL-led operation to isolate the West Point area of Monrovia, the prices of essential goods within the cordon skyrocketed within hours. Panicked residents protested the cordon, and in the confrontation with the AFL shots were fired and a 15-year old boy was fatally wounded. Following that incident, President Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf made the commitment that there would be no further use of lethal force, and on 30 August the West Point cordon was lifted.

Movement restrictions throughout the country continue, including through operations of the Armed Forces. Criteria for passage at checkpoints have not been consistently implemented or clearly communicated to the public, and opportunities for vigilantism and profiteering have increased. Although some coordination has been visible among security agencies in the EVD response, each agency has planned and executed its own security operation, with coordination more visible at the county level. A joint command centre has been established to oversee nationwide operations.

The halting of cross-border trade, domestic movement restrictions and general economic uncertainty have prompted panic buying of food and

other goods. Several major concessions have reassured the Government and their own employees that they are not planning to close, although many have reduced operations and repatriated foreign personnel. A number of forestry concessions have stopped operating and over 10,000 forestry workers have reportedly been laid off. With unemployment and underemployment already high, Ebola has added to Liberia's economic uncertainty.

The Ministry of Finance and Development Planning has announced that the Government already faces a \$57-million revenue shortfall, and informed donors of preliminary indications of a \$116-million budget gap. Growth projections have been revised downward to 2.9 per cent from 5.9 per cent. The executive is revising the budget to reflect revenue shortfalls and to assure that the Government has the resources to operate while responding to Ebola. The national budget for the fiscal year beginning 1 July not having been passed, the Government has been operating on an advance equivalent to one-twelfth of last year's budget.

The EVD outbreak has also created uncertainty around some fundamental democratic processes. Noting that it would be unable to deliver credible senatorial elections in October, as scheduled, the National Elections Commission proposed a postponement until the second week of December, which would allow the vote to take place before the 15 incumbent senators finish their terms on 6 January. The legal framework for a postponement is being explored by the legislature and the Law Reform Commission. The National Elections Commission will need clarity soon. There is growing recognition that even a December electoral timeline may be difficult to maintain should the crisis stretch.

The constitutional review process has also suffered. The national constitutional conference envisaged for August could not be held, delaying national discussion of proposed amendments and the legislative consideration of proposals that was to follow. It pushes the national referendum on constitutional reforms into at least 2016. The Government is, by its own admission, extremely stretched. Several officials have reportedly left the country or remained abroad, despite the President's Office announcing on 11 August that officials who failed to return to the country within a week would lose their jobs. A lack of confidence in the Government's capacity to address the crisis has contributed to fluid political dynamics, and it has been widely reported that some Liberians, including among the diaspora,

have called for an organized transition from the present Government.

A successful Ebola response will require steady governance. Since the end of the civil war, Liberia has made progress in developing basic institutional capacities while laying the foundations for a transformed democratic State. However, the Ebola crisis has started to strip away some of that progress. The enormous task of addressing Ebola has revealed persistent and profound institutional weaknesses, including in the security sector. As demands pile up, the police face monumental challenges in planning and implementing large-scale operations due to poor logistics and communications, an overly centralized command structure and an over-concentration of personnel in Monrovia.

Although the delicate progress achieved in the security transition may be stalled by Ebola, the handover of security functions from the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) to national actors has so far taken place according to Government and UNMIL agreed timelines. Since the completion of the second phase of UNMIL's military drawdown in June, the Mission no longer has a fixed military presence in seven of Liberia's 15 counties, and four counties have no presence of UNMIL armed security response capacity.

As increased funding is found to respond to EVD, it will be important that the Government take full responsibility for resourcing the Liberia National Police adequately and holding it accountable for delivery. Critical to that will be the ability to use the opportunity to deploy police officers more widely throughout the country. The Ebola outbreak has halted UNMIL's joint border operations with the United Nations Operation in Côte d'Ivoire and Ivorian authorities. Other than incidents within Côte d'Ivoire near the Liberian border in February and May, the border areas have been peaceful during 2014. Although Ivorian refugee returns remain suspended, the situation in the refugee camps remains calm.

Early on in the crisis, the Government established a national task force on Ebola, chaired by the President herself, operating as overall leadership for the response in Liberia. The structure, which has undergone adjustments, has been criticized for failing to bring the epidemic under control. There have been calls in Liberia for a stronger international role in coordination structures.

As in Guinea and Sierra Leone, discussions are under way to design an overarching coordination platform for response efforts in Liberia through a national and international partnership. Beyond an initial \$20 million of Government funding approved by the legislature, of which \$5 million have been made available, the related trust fund has not received significant financial support. Transparent and credible financial management will be essential, and the World Bank is working on a modality through its development trust fund.

Since late July, UNMIL has turned its full focus on EVD and engaged in supporting the nationally led response. Given the reduced activity of the Government and other national actors, some of UNMIL's work, as originally conceived, has slowed in the areas of constitutional reform, national reconciliation, land reform, the capacity-building of security agencies, and natural resource management. UNMIL has not ceased its mandated activities, however, and other work has intensified with respect to the security sector and the rule of law, political good offices, the protection of civilians and human rights monitoring and support.

In the fight against the EVD, the Mission is working through four pillars of engagement and support: security and the rule of law, logistics, communications and outreach, and coordination at both the central and the county levels. Our military and police continue to provide operational advice and support to national counterparts, including embedding liaison officers within the joint command centre with Liberian military, police and immigration personnel. UNMIL has worked closely with the Ministry of Justice and the judiciary to address the extremely high rates of pre-trial detention, helping to alleviate some overcrowding in Liberia's major prisons, which is an added concern within the Ebola context.

The Mission is not directly enforcing the quarantining of communities or counties, but is monitoring all security operations under the state of emergency. UNMIL's own security posture is kept under constant review to best place the Mission in its protection-of-civilians mandate. We have played a large role in the logistics of the EVD response, both in the planning and the delivery of operations. UNMIL leads an interagency crisis logistics team comprising the World Health Organization (WHO), the World Food Programme, UNICEF and the International Committee of the Red Cross, which conducts logistics planning,

inventory management, stock control, distribution and coordination at the Ministry of Health and Social Welfare. That team links closely with UNMIL logistics to deliver supplies throughout the country.

In support of Government outreach efforts, UNMIL has engaged in nationwide communications on EVD education and prevention measures. That is done through traditional communicators, UNMIL radio programming in 17 Liberian languages, and the printing of over 150,000 flyers, among other things. UNMIL retains a civilian presence in each of Liberia's 15 counties, where we have always worked closely with local authorities. Since March, when Lofa county became the epicentre of the outbreak in Liberia, UNMIL has provided coordination support to county superintendents, county health teams and county EVD task forces.

In discussion with several superintendents and county health teams, I have found insightful thinking, planning and initiatives around the basic measures of preventing the spread of Ebola. So far, however, many superintendents have received only \$2,300 from the central Government. We understand that more funding may be on the way. Meanwhile, UNMIL has turned its ever-useful quick impact projects programme towards rapid Ebola support.

UNMIL and the United Nations country team partners continue to benefit from a close and consultative relationship. Five weeks ago, I began bringing together a few leaders of the international health partner agencies on the front lines, including Doctors Without Borders and the United States Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, with a small number of United Nations colleagues, including the WHO leadership, to brainstorm around Ebola responses on a scale not foreseen by any existing protocols. Responding in that context is beyond any of us acting alone, and we will do everything we can to maintain those close links on the ground.

In that connection, let me mention that in addition to reorienting our activities, UNMIL and the United Nations more broadly have advocated at the highest levels to prevent the international isolation of Liberia and its neighbours affected by the Ebola epidemic. The Mission is also seeking support arrangements for front-line international responders and the diplomatic community to enable them to stay and operate in Liberia. That includes access to UNMIL's shuttle flights between Monrovia and Accra, which were

reactivated on 7 September, and access to UNMIL's medical facilities for routine medical care.

United Nations Headquarters continues to engage with Member States to secure an EVD-specific treatment centre and medical evacuation arrangements for United Nations personnel, the diplomatic community and front-line international EVD responders. From our own organization, we are seeking a decision to provide danger pay to our personnel in recognition of the severe stress and uncertainty of the unprecedented situation, which is, understandably, not captured within the existing United Nations regulations.

This epidemic of unprecedented scale would challenge any Government and any society. Even as Liberia and its partners respond, the disaster continues to grow — a tragedy for a country that has seen so much hardship. UNMIL has pledged to provide its full support and continues to review the range of capabilities we can bring to ending this latter-day plague, which must be stopped in its tracks and stopped soon.

The President: I thank Ms. Landgren for her briefing, and particularly for tailoring it to the crisis at hand.

I now give the floor to Mr. Grunditz.

Mr. Grunditz: Let me begin by expressing my deepest condolences to the families and friends of all those who have perished in the Ebola outbreak. I would like to commend the concerned countries for their resilience and steadfast determination in these difficult times. I pay tribute to the many brave health-care workers engaged in the tireless efforts to counter this terrible disease. Let me also express appreciation for the important support provided by the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL), members of the United Nations country team, particularly the World Health Organization, and other international partners.

The Peacebuilding Commission (PBC) has an important role in raising awareness, mobilizing resources and encouraging coordinated international support for a Liberia now facing a merciless epidemic. Yesterday, the PBC Organizational Committee held a meeting with Mr. Nabarro, the senior United Nations system coordinator for the Ebola virus disease, and decided to issue a statement in support of his efforts. As Chairs of the PBC configurations for Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone, we issued a letter on 6 August highlighting the need for international support. On 18 August, we also held a joint informal meeting via

video teleconference with the United Nations at the country level, resulting in the issuance of a statement stressing the need for resource mobilization and for the coordination of international efforts. At that meeting, the Secretary General of the Mano River Union, Mr. Kaba, also underlined the need for closer regional coordination. The PBC should be well placed to continue facilitating a regional perspective, as well as to promote relevant links between the security, humanitarian and development aspects of the crisis.

The Ebola epidemic is unprecedented. Liberia is facing an accelerated and multidimensional crisis. Humanitarian needs are rising fast. Restrictions on mobility have already had a serious impact on economic activity, and economic growth is predicted to slow down significantly, putting further strain on already scarce Government finances. In Liberia, the crisis has hit at a time when growth was already declining and fiscal constraints had started to affect funding in several areas, including for important peacebuilding priorities.

Despite significant national and international efforts, this deadly disease, which transcends national borders, is now growing exponentially. The challenges posed by what has become the worst Ebola epidemic in history would be overwhelming for any single country to cope with alone. The well-coordinated support of the international community and regional cooperation are absolutely critical.

The outbreak has generated challenges in several areas and demonstrated that, notwithstanding the considerable progress made over the past decade, Liberia remains a fragile country in post-conflict transition. It is fragile in terms of both resources and resilience to shocks such as this. We have also witnessed incidents of unrest, the spread of fear among the population, and some resistance to Government intervention. It is evident that sustained international support will be needed to ensure that the important gains made in development and stability can be maintained, and to ensure that Liberia continues on the path towards long-term peace and prosperity.

Our immediate focus should be on supporting Liberia in combating this deadly virus and coping with the humanitarian needs it has created. Short-term interventions, however, need not be short-sighted. To the extent possible, efforts need to connect with longer-term objectives. For instance, short-term health interventions should link up with longer-term

strengthening of the health sector. Furthermore, a comprehensive approach, addressing the broad array of challenges will be needed. Government efforts to ensure the rule of law and the protection of civilians, as well as effective public communication and other confidence-building measures to prevent further social unrest should be encouraged and supported.

Another example, highlighted in the report from my visit to Liberia in early July, is the urgent need to resource and address the immediate capability and mobility gaps of the Liberia National Police. A continued strong international presence on the ground, including UNMIL, will be important to all these efforts, as will the provision of adequate, rapid and flexible resources.

Later on, as opportunities again arise and resources become available, peacebuilding efforts should continue. While there may well be need for some adjustments to the agreed peacebuilding programme, national reconciliation processes and the further strengthening of national institutions, including the police, justice and security sectors, will likely remain key priorities. The decentralization of services and land reform, as well as the accountable and transparent management of natural resources, are also fundamental to long-term peace and stability in the country. As we continue to support these peacebuilding efforts in Liberia, important lessons should be drawn from the current crisis, including with a view to further strengthening resilience and State-society relations.

Considering the negative impact of the crisis on the Liberian economy, joint efforts will also be needed to stimulate future growth and development. The admission of Liberia to the World Trade Organization could be important in this regard. While the Liberian Government will need to provide national resources for longer-term peacebuilding priorities, the continued strong support of international partners in this area will be even more essential during the period of recovery from the deep crisis Liberia is now facing. The continuation of work by the Government of Liberia on a new deal compact could promote streamlined and simplified donor frameworks for accountability and the effectiveness of future support. The Peacebuilding Support Office stands ready to flexibly reorient the allocation of funds from the Peacebuilding Fund, should this be needed.

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

I now give the floor to the Minister of National Defense of Liberia.

Mr. Samukai (Liberia): It is a privilege for me to participate for the second time in a meeting of the Council on the activities of the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL). Let me begin by expressing the profound gratitude of President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf and the Government and people of Liberia to the Council for its continued support of peace and stability in Liberia. We also want to congratulate you, Madam President, on your assumption of the presidency of the Council for this month.

We are meeting at a time when Liberia is facing a serious threat to its national existence. The deadly Ebola virus has caused a disruption of the normal functioning of our State. The disease, which early this year was identified in the remote villages of our country, has now reached urban centres, including the capital, Monrovia. It is now spreading like wild fire, devouring everything in its path. The already weak health infrastructure of the country has been overwhelmed. Health workers, including doctors and nurses who are at the front line of the fight to control the disease, have been highly affected, with several — including some of the country's most prominent doctors and nurses — have lost their lives.

The rapid spread of this virus has created a health crisis, requiring the President to institute measures aimed at containment. These measures include establishment of the National Task Force on Ebola, headed by the President herself; the creation of an incident management team, led by the Ministry of Health and Social Welfare; and the declaration of a state of emergency for 90 days. Additional measures include a one-month compulsory leave for non-essential Government employees, now extended for a second month, to limit human to human contact. Communities with a high incidence of infection have been contained and, in specific cases, quarantined in order to limit movement. A nationwide curfew is currently in place, with adjustments having been made only yesterday.

The Government of Liberia launched an awareness campaign with the full support of UNMIL, the Liberian media, civil society organizations, the business community and other bilateral and international partners. The Government, through the national legislature, also provided an initial allocation of \$5 million to support the national strategy against the spread of the deadly virus. A subsequent appeal was made

to the international community to provide financial, logistical and material support for the implementation of the national strategy, which prioritizes the following actions: the personal protection and safety of health-care workers, providing better health-care services for all Ebola virus disease cases, and providing general health care for the population, among other measures.

In spite of all these measures, continued denial, traditional practices, religious rituals, fear and community resistance still constitute obstacles to progress. Government is using all available means to overcome these obstacles and minimize mob violence and other infractions of peace and security. From the few cases registered in March, the pandemic has mushroomed into a health emergency exceeding the Government's response capacity. As we speak, this deadly disease continues to spread and cause havoc in many communities. Nine of the 15 counties in Liberia are currently affected. Liberia lacks the infrastructure, logistical capacity professional expertise and financial resources necessary to effectively address this disease.

To be candid, the response of the international community to the appeal of our Government and partners, in particular the World Health Organization and Médecins Sans Frontières, was initially less than robust. However, we are thankful to the Secretary-General for his leadership and initiative in focusing global attention on the virus, including his appointment of a United Nations System Coordinator on Ebola in the person of Mr. David Nabarro. We are very encouraged by the current efforts of the United Nations to mobilize resources and coordinate the scaling up of interventions to bring surge capacity to bear in response to the tragic situation. We are equally appreciative of the action taken by the African Union yesterday in dispatching a technical team and making funding available to support national efforts. Even today, the African Union has issued a call to all its member States to urgently lift all travel bans imposed on countries affected by the ebola outbreak in Africa. We ask all Council members to use their good offices to support that call.

The health emergency is affecting every sector of our society. Our economy has been seriously disrupted. Local economic activities such as domestic food production, mining and transport services, just to name a few, have been undermined. Moreover, the slowdown in domestic food production, particularly in affected areas of the country, has had a negative impact on food supply, thus triggering increasing demand for imported

commodities at higher prices. The hospitality industry has also been seriously affected by the epidemic. Today, only two international airlines — Brussels Airlines and Royal Air Maroc — are flying to and from Liberia. The suspension of flights has accentuated the difficulties we are facing and exacerbated the constraints of humanitarian delivery.

Until today, there have been no reports of infections among either national or international UNMIL staff. The Government is aware that the stakes are high, as troop- and police-contributing countries harbour concerns for the health and safety of their citizens. We extend our appreciation to those countries and appeal for their solidarity by allowing their forces to continue their assignment in Liberia. The United Nations plan for scaling up the international response needs to benefit from the use of military assets as well. We thank those countries that have provided these assets and encourage others to do the same.

The Government of Liberia fully supports the Secretary-General's request for a technical rollover of UNMIL's mandate for the next three months. Our attention and focus need to be directed towards containing and eliminating the ebola virus from Liberia and other countries. We encourage continued flexibility on the part of the Council in these very difficult circumstances for Liberia. We also hope that the deliberations will take into account the imperatives of protecting the investment and gains made in Liberia over the years for peace and stability. I thank the Council for its continued support.

The President: I thank Minister Samukai both for his briefing and for travelling here to present the facts of what is happening in his country.

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 10.45 a.m.