



SECURITY COUNCIL REPORT UPDATE REPORT



19 June 2006 No. 4

LIBERIA

Expected Council Action

The Council is expected to adopt a resolution on 20 June suspending the timber sanctions for ninety days and renewing the diamond sanctions for six months, with a review in four months. The mandate of the Panel of Experts is also expected to be renewed.

There is strong support among Council members for the cautious approach in the Secretary-General's proposals vis-à-vis the drawdown of the UN Mission in Liberia (UNMIL). The recommendation that an additional police unit for UNMIL be authorised is likely to be discussed in the coming weeks. Positions are still being formed and it is unclear when and whether a new resolution authorising the police unit will emerge. But the general expectation is that members will be able to agree to the recommendation.

Council Dynamics

There is sympathy among Council members for the new Government of Liberia, and a desire to continue UN support as the country consolidates its security, reconstruction and reform efforts. There is also sympathy for the argument that the current sanctions regime was established in different circumstances, that it should be reviewed and that the ultimate responsibility for Liberia's security lies with Liberians themselves.

One immediate consequence of this positive tone was the partial lifting of the arms embargo on 13 June through resolution 1683 for limited supplies of weapons and ammunition for the new security forces of Liberia, subject to the prior approval of the Sanctions Committee on a case-by-case basis.

But, with respect to the timber and diamonds sanctions, some Council members had concerns that key benchmarks had not been met, and that it may have been too premature to lift the sanctions at this point. There is also concern that premature lifting may undermine the credibility of Council sanctions regimes, and that a degree of pressure should be kept so that the benchmarks could be fully met.

The US circulated a draft resolution lifting the timber sanctions and renewing the diamond sanctions for four months (as opposed to the usual six to twelve months). A compromise was achieved in

suspending the timber sanctions for ninety days during which the Liberian government is expected to adopt key legislation.

As for the diamond sanctions, proposals varied between four and six months. Compromise language was found in renewing for six months with a review after four months.

There is some expectation that the Sanctions Committee will review the individual travel ban measures imposed under resolution 1521 on a case-by-case basis in view of the request of the Liberian government.

Key Facts

The current mandate of the Panel and the sanctions regime will expire on 20 June.

Liberia's new president, Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf, addressed the Council in an open debate 17 March expressing her commitment to fulfil the conditions for the lifting of timber and diamond sanctions.

In June, the president further requested the suspension and/or lifting of the individual travel bans on a case-by-case basis and of the sanctions on timber and diamonds, citing developments regarding the positive engagement of previous peace spoilers, as well as measures taken to increase control over the production of timber and diamond, that were perceived to meet Council preconditions. The letter also cited the obstacles to development created by the diamond and timber sanctions, which were echoed in a similar call from the Economic community of West African States (ECOWAS).

The benchmarks pursuant to resolution 1521 (2003) for lifting sanctions are:

- **Diamonds:** when the *Sanctions Committee*, with expert advice, considers that the Government of Liberia has established a "transparent, effective and internationally verifiable" Certificate of Origin regime. The existing certification scheme is the Kimberley Process.
- **Timber:** when the *Council* determines that the Government of Liberia has established full control over producing areas, and has ensured that revenues from that industry are not used for fuelling conflict.
- **Travel Ban and Arms Embargo:** "when the *Council* determines that the ceasefire in Liberia is being fully respected and maintained, disarmament, demobilization, reintegration, repatriation and restructuring of the security sector have been completed, the provisions of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement are being fully implemented, and significant progress has been made in establishing and maintaining stability in Liberia and the subregion."

The Panel of Experts' June report noted that further steps were still required with a view towards meeting the requirements of the Kimberley scheme.

It also noted that key progress was made in the timber industry, but that steps such as the enactment of key legislation were still needed. The Panel of Experts further highlighted the difficulties with the new legislature, including the fact that some congressmen were on Council targeted sanctions lists.

On UNMIL's drawdown, the recent Secretary-General's report showed a degree of caution. There are remaining concerns with the creation of a security vacuum and with risks to the extension of state authority in Liberia should UNMIL be downsized prematurely. The Secretary-General indicated his

intention to withdraw one battalion in the latter part of 2006, and to consider withdrawing a second battalion in early 2007 bearing in mind developments in the security situation on the ground.

The report indicates that key benchmarks for assessing UNMIL's drawdown in the future will include progress with security sector reform, the reintegration of former combatants and the consolidation of state authority. Further elaboration of benchmarks is expected to be provided in the forthcoming reports.

Council members in general support the Secretary-General's proposals for drawdown and share his concerns regarding a premature withdrawal. There is also interest in receiving a further elaboration of the benchmarks for downsizing.

The report also reiterated the recommendation that an additional formed police unit be authorised for UNMIL. The request is due to concerns with the challenges from social unrest as the government implements reform policies and to recent riots that erupted among demobilised military personnel. There is also the view that, as the peace consolidation phase progresses, policing tasks become increasingly important.

On mandate adjustments, the March report already indicated that the preference would be for UNMIL to consolidate the achievements made thus far over a period of up to two years, during which the Mission could focus on an adjusted mandate.

Recent Developments

Resolution 1688 endorsing the trial of Charles Taylor by the Special Court for Sierra Leone in International Criminal Court (ICC) premises was adopted on 16 June. Negotiations started in early May, but the resolution was put on hold until a government accepted to take Charles Taylor after the trial. This was one of the pre-conditions from the Netherlands, which was fulfilled with the announcement earlier this month that the UK is ready to take Taylor after the trial is concluded. For detailed information and background, please refer to our 7 April *Update Report*.

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission was inaugurated this month, and is expected to compile information on violations linked to the civil war. While this development was received positively, there are reports of frustration among activists with the absence of a formal legal mechanism to try those most responsible for crimes. The government has reportedly resisted this option.

Perceived threats to Liberia's stability include disgruntled groups (including demobilised elements from the Armed Forces of Liberia), illegal exploitation of and lack of control over natural resources, corruption, the need to improve public services and life conditions and land and property disputes arising from the return of displaced persons. The government has announced the intention to hold a donors' conference in mid-July to attract funds for reconstruction programs, but additional funding seems to be dependent upon the governments' ability to demonstrate ways of repaying its foreign debt.

Willingness to allow the continuation of troop-sharing between UNMIL and the UN Operation in Côte D'Ivoire (UNOCI) has diminished in recent months with the authorisation of additional troops and police for UNOCI as a result of a compromise that was reached with the unlocking of resources resulting from the downsizing of the UN Mission in Ethiopia and Eritrea (UNMEE).

Some Council members, in particular the US, were not comfortable with the continuation of troop-

sharing due to concerns with stability in Liberia. These concerns seem to be linked to the fact that security sector reform is still ongoing and Liberia does not have a standing military corps yet.

UN Documents

Recent Security Council Resolutions

- S/RES/1688 (16 June 2006) endorsed Taylor's trial by the Special Court in ICC facilities.
- S/RES/1683 (13 June 2006) partially lifted the arms embargo for the new security forces of Liberia.
- S/RES/1667 (31 March 2006) renewed UNMIL's mandate as well as the deployment of UNMIL troops to provide security for the Special Court until 30 September.
- S/RES/1647 (20 December 2005) renewed the arms embargo and travel ban for a period of 12 months and renewed the diamond and timber sanctions for a period of six months.

Latest Secretary General's Report

- S/2006/376 (9 June 2006) contained plans on UNMIL's drawdown until the end of the year and recommended an additional police unit.

Other Relevant Documents

- S/2006/365 (7 June 2006) was a letter from the Liberian government requesting the lifting of the diamond and timber sanctions and of the travel ban imposed through resolution 1521.
- S/PV.5389 (17 March 2006) was a Council open debate with Liberian President Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf.

Other Relevant Facts

Special Representative of the Secretary-General

Alan Doss (United Kingdom)

Size and Composition of Mission

Total authorized strength: up to 15,000 military personnel and 1,115 police.

Strength as of 1 June 2006: 14,794 military personnel and 1,051 police.

Key troop contributors: Bangladesh, Pakistan, Ethiopia and Nigeria.

Cost

1 July 2005 - 30 June 2006: \$760.57 million

Duration

September 2003 to present.