

**Remarks By
Liberia's Permanent Representative to the United Nations
Ambassador Lewis G. Brown, II
Delivered to the United Nations Security Council**

Friday, December 2, 2016

Mr. President

I thank you for the opportunity to participate in this Briefing Session. A few months ago, we were similarly honored. We used the occasion to draw the attention of the Council to the continued progress of Liberia in consolidating its cherished peace. Today, notwithstanding the difficulties we face and the challenges that lie ahead, we remain confident and optimistic in the success of the peacekeeping mission, and in the growing capacities of the Liberian government to maintain and sustain the peace.

Essentially, the defining question of this current engagement of the Council is how, and importantly, when can a transition from full peacekeeping operations occur so that Liberia's progress and the success achieved at such high costs in lives and treasure are not unnecessarily risked and regrettably undermined.

Essentially, as to the important question of "how", a number of measures have been recommended by the Secretary General in defining the possible mandate of a successor mission. The Liberian Government finds these measures to be largely favorable. We however urge careful consideration including of analyses not only of residual gaps but also of the quality of accompaniment, as well as lessons to be learned so as to more meaningfully address the challenges of the future – challenges in peace building, consolidation and development.

Responding to the critical question of "when", the Liberian Government is proposing an extension through a definitive period of one year. Only one more year to continue the phased withdrawal – one more year to enable our recovering and reforming institutions to continue to stand up as UNMIL draws down; one more year of presence of UNMIL which represents to many Liberians, a 'brand of confidence' that would assist in mitigating, if not deterring, the real risk of a disruption during the country's most sensitive political period. Only one more year of working together, in what for Liberia is a successful partnership to properly prepare for a successor mission and a democratically-elected government to continue the useful partnership and build upon the progress.

We understand the many concerns associated with our request for an extension. There are concerns about increasing dependencies by national institutions on the international community; there are concerns that a request for extension may become recurring; there are concerns that the resources contributed to UNMIL are needed elsewhere including in more troubled spots; there are concerns that similarly conflicted countries, including in our neighborhood, have had their missions brought to successful closures which necessitates that we do so as well; and there are concerns that electoral processes are not the objects, or ought not to be the objectives, of peacekeeping missions. These are all reasonable concerns.

Mr. President

The failure of the Liberian State, which necessitated the deployment of UNMIL, also occasioned the greatest collapse in the productive capacity of any nation since World War II – an estimated collapse of

more than ninety percent. Corroded over time, national institutions were not simply defaced and rendered dysfunctional; they were effectively eviscerated. Dwindling public confidence was altogether lost, and hope in a democratic future was nonexistent.

Of course, we have come a long way. Thanks to your continued support. And we are always the first to admit that we have some ways to go to become the nation we know we can be.

Notwithstanding, we intend to meet our target of an eight thousand strong police force fully deployed all across the country from its current strength of five thousand one hundred, and to ensure a continuous commitment of the police, and all other security institutions, to training including in the important element of safeguarding human rights and improved professional standards. The nearly two thousand six hundred immigration officers will be further strengthened with the completion of training facilities in northern Liberia with a training capacity of one thousand officers. And we are proud that our military is growing in professional competence with support especially from the United States, and other friendly governments, and with mentoring from ECOWAS. Access and affordability to justice which was nonexistent in many parts of the country is improving. Our security institutions are demonstrating signs of increasing readiness to stand up as UNMIL stands down.

However, we continue to remind ourselves not to be consumed by overconfidence. The ensuing conduct of historically unprecedented elections, the impactful consequences for the future, and the associated risks that portend, are challenges for which many of our institutions may not yet be fully tested or adequately prepared. To have UNMIL, this 'confidence brand', walk with Liberia for only one more year through this last mile is an added guarantee and a priceless insurance which completes the UN Mission of keeping the peace not only by the separation of belligerents, but importantly also, through a more meaningful transformation from a failed state to a thriving democracy. And although this may not have been the mandate *per se*, it is hard to imagine that the peaceful and successful conduct of the ensuing critical elections is not an important test, if not the last important test, of the success of the mission.

Indeed resources are finite. And yes, there are growing needs in other parts of the world including on the African Continent for the resources of UNMIL. We continue to consider this situation seriously, and take the needed steps, within the limits of our means, to be removed from a dependence on UNMIL.

And the truth also is that the lack of resources, or the growing need in other parts of the world for the resources of UNMIL, must necessarily compel all of us – the Liberian Government and the Security Council – to bring this successful mission to an end in a way that may not require a return to the Security Council, nor will the Security Council perceive a reason, to redeploy peacekeeping resources to Liberia in the foreseeable future. In this regard, the potential risks, especially pertaining to the conduct of unprecedented elections, to which the recent Assessment Report of the Secretary General refers and the Peace Building Commission alludes, should be avoided.

Mr. President

Whatever decision the Council makes, the truth is that today, Liberia is a better country – a more peaceful and secure nation. We intend to keep it that way. Again, we are grateful to the Security Council, the other agencies of the United Nations as well as our many bilateral and multilateral partners for your continued support. We do not take your continued support, or its associated costs, for granted, nor should the depths of our gratitude be ever underestimated.

We know that because of your priceless investments in Liberia's peace and security, today, Liberians are increasingly hopeful – imbued with a growing desire, a more realistic impulse – at home and across the Diaspora, to be the builders of our future and the masters of our destiny.

We know we were brought to our knees by the prolonged tragedies of self-implosion. But no nation has been more desperate to recover. Again, we were recently ravaged by Ebola, and are currently shackled by an economy under severe stress. But the resiliency of our Liberian character – our will to overcome – must never be taken for granted.

Even so, Liberia cannot afford another major shock to our recovery. We simply cannot afford to ignore the possibility, however remote, of another risk to our ongoing recovery efforts. One more year is all that we believe we will need to deter the looming risk. One more year, to afford a new administration of the Liberian Government the security it would need to continue the recovery and reform processes without the baggage of inherited insecurity.

Mr. President

We are really at the end of a long walk together through UNMIL. We know it has been difficult. But it has been worthwhile. It has lifted spirits, rekindled hope and brought a country back from the depths of its own self-destruction. This may not have been the mandate *per se*. But no one can deny that this United Nations Mission has been successful. Let us now end it as sustainably, as responsibly, and as successfully as we possibly can.

I thank you for your kind attention.