

**REBUILDING LIBERIA:
PROSPECTS AND PERILS**

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REBUILDING LIBERIA: PROSPECTS AND PERILS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Liberia is a collapsed state that has become in effect a UN protectorate. Whether its political and economic reconstruction can begin depends on how quickly security spreads throughout the country. Squabbles over jobs by leaders of the armed factions have caused near-paralysis in the transitional government. Faction leaders tried to block disarmament until they received more jobs, boding ill for the peace process. The display of cynicism and greed by fighters and political leaders alike has undermined international confidence ahead of the donors' conference that meets in New York, 5-6 February 2004.

There is also concern about the role the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) can play in restoring peace. While many hold that with a Chapter Seven mandate, 15,000 troops and 1,115 civilian police it can hardly fail, internal coordination and management problems have contributed to insecurity at least in the short term. "The honeymoon is over for the UN in Liberia", a senior UNMIL official told ICG in late 2003 after the fiasco surrounding the start of disarmament on 7 December.

The decision to start that process so early was a dangerous miscalculation. UNMIL was not ready. It did not have enough troops on the ground, and coordination with UN agencies was poor. Failure to have all appropriate mechanisms in place led to days of chaos, the deaths of nine people (suspected members of armed factions) and the wounding of one peacekeeper. Fighters loyal to the former government (now officially one of three armed factions) and its ex-president, Charles Taylor, clashed with UNMIL peacekeepers. Disarmament is rescheduled to start in late February 2004, with more peacekeepers deployed and improved coordination.

Liberians still have high hopes that UNMIL will help to provide sustained peace but it will need to ensure that it does not continue to make costly mistakes. It

needs no reminding that peace processes in the 1990s failed partly because of poor disarmament. Another failure would have grave consequences for an already troubled West African region as well as for future peacekeeping operations elsewhere. There are worrying signs that the leadership of the two main factions formerly opposed to Charles Taylor's government, Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy (LURD) and the Movement for Democracy in Liberia (MODEL), are trying to keep their fighting forces intact – not least in case their regional sponsors, Guinea and Côte d'Ivoire respectively, need them to tackle internal dissent and participate in wars of their own.

The main spoilers are politicians associated with armed factions. Often, fighters appear more committed to peace than their political masters. No faction leader has any political vision for governing Liberia. It has become evident, five months into the peace process, that some politicians are prepared to jeopardise peace for the sake of jobs. The two years of UN-led transition are seen as a moment to grab whatever is worth having of a bankrupt state. Internal divisions, particularly within LURD, also may disrupt the peace process. UNMIL needs to use a solid reintegration package to peel the fighters away from the politicians, leaving the spoilers vulnerable and unable to threaten the peace. On the other hand, failure to deal with fighters' expectations would undermine UNMIL efforts, leaving the chain of command between fighters and faction leaders in place.

UNMIL must also work harder at achieving local ownership. So far, it has been unwilling to devolve significant power or responsibility to Liberians. To a large extent, however, it has had little choice. The National Transitional Government of Liberia (NTGL), which includes among others an unsavoury mixture of greedy, malicious and murderous characters, cannot be trusted to implement the peace

accords. Its civilian chairman, Gyude Bryant, is hamstrung by the unscrupulous behaviour of politicians supported by the armed factions.

Nevertheless, Liberians will need to own and take responsibility for the process if UNMIL's efforts are to bear fruit. Religious leaders, political leaders, and the remaining small band of civil society activists must be brought on board to play a greater role. At the same time UNMIL should be more subtle and discreet in getting Liberians, in particular the former warring factions, to pursue peace. Gaining the confidence of Liberians and ultimately winning the peace, depends not only on tough words and strong arm tactics, but also quiet diplomacy.

Even if the Special Representative of the UN Secretary General, Jacques Paul Klein, and his team can deliver a more sustainable disarmament process and security ahead of elections in October 2005, the international community cannot realistically assume that its job has been done. The donors conference is the moment to offer concrete international support that can mean security not only in Liberia but for neighbouring countries as well. Klein estimates that Liberia needs at least U.S.\$200 million to repair basic infrastructure alone. The UN-led assessment of need defined in conjunction with the NTGL, World Bank and others has a U.S.\$500 million price tag through December 2005. Donors must register the fact that Liberia's reconstruction requires serious long-term commitments and a focus on hard issues. The immediate tasks involve ensuring security on the ground; putting in place a new government, extending its authority throughout the country, and establishing the rule of law; and continued humanitarian aid. But an early start is also required at rebuilding a devastated social and economic infrastructure to provide opportunities for successful return to productive society of ex-combatants, refugees and IDPs.

Along with technical work to reform the army and police and rebuild infrastructure, political and constitutional issues relating to the powers of the presidency must be addressed. Attention needs to be given to prising power from the hands of a political clique in Monrovia. A vastly improved civil administration is essential to promote better governance and proper management of revenue collection and expenditure and to avoid persistent corruption. Rebuilding Liberia's interior and ensuring that its shattered communities have a major stake in development will be essential to improve lives. Donors must be cognizant of the fact that a

stable and well governed Liberia is essential to a secure peace in the West African region.

RECOMMENDATIONS

To the United Nations Security Council:

1. Encourage member states to deploy troops to the UN Mission in Liberia in a timely fashion.
2. Condemn attempts by armed groups or other parties to reinterpret the Accra Peace Agreement and deliver a clear message to leaders of armed factions that they will be held accountable, through the International Criminal Court or other appropriate institutions, if they continue to violate its terms.

To the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL):

3. Ensure better monitoring of checkpoints, especially in Monrovia, to prevent weapons from entering the capital.
4. Drive a wedge between rank-and-file fighters and faction leaders by offering the former a solid reintegration package and taking every available opportunity to explain how UNMIL offers ex-combatants more reliable and legitimate peace benefits than the warlords turned politicians.
5. Involve a wide cross-section of Liberian society in the disarmament and reintegration process.
6. Improve the level of cohesion and information between the civilian and military components of the mission and coordinate better with UN agencies and international non-governmental organisations on disarmament programs.
7. Coordinate border patrols with the United Nations Mission to Côte d'Ivoire (MINUCI) and the French Opération Licorne in that country in order to slow the cross-border flow of combatants and arms, and encourage MINUCI and Opération Licorne forces to extend the demilitarised zone of confidence in the west of Côte d'Ivoire to the Liberian border.

To International Financial Institutions and Donor Countries:

8. Commission an audit of government funds diverted by Charles Taylor and his entourage and demand that assets frozen in various

- overseas bank accounts be returned to the country.
9. Provide as a matter of urgency funds to finance the reintegration of Liberia's ex-combatants, including programs for vocational training, access to education and jobs.
 10. Expand assistance beyond humanitarian aid and finance programs that lead to concerted economic and political change, as contemplated in the UN-led draft assessment, including by targeting assistance at:
 - (a) security sector reform, notably the complete disbanding of militias, paramilitary police units and private armies, and training emphasis on respect for human rights in the new national army and police;
 - (b) political reform, notably strengthening weak governmental structures and establishing a transparent and accountable system of governance;
 - (c) economic reform, notably a centralised system of revenue collection, review of all contracts and monopolies, reform of the taxation system, and better management of the budget and natural resources;
 - (d) judicial and human rights reform, notably monitoring and gathering of evidence of abuses, and developing legal rights, better legal practices and penal reform;
 - (e) education, beginning with paying teachers and funding aimed at getting young people back to school; and
 - (f) civil society reform, notably supporting and consolidating alternative institutions that could counterbalance the lack of legitimacy of the National Transitional Government of Liberia.
 11. Think beyond Monrovia and encourage devolution by channeling aid directly to the devastated interior to support local structures and grassroots political and economic life.
 12. Endorse a national consultative conference aimed at promoting dialogue on constitutional reform, especially on how to limit the power of the president, establish better separation of powers, and change the restrictions on nationality and citizenship.

13. Begin to examine regional approaches to development that can impact on the forces of instability in neighbouring countries that affect Liberia.
14. The European Union should continue to condition delivery of its aid on fulfilment by the National Transitional Government of the human rights benchmarks set pursuant to Article 96 of the Cotonou Agreement.

To the U.S. Government:

15. Offer airlift and equipment assistance to troop donor countries to ensure that the remaining 6,000 of UNMIL's envisaged 15,000 force can be deployed fully by the end of February.

To the Chairman of the National Transitional Government of Liberia:

16. Continue to warn the warring factions that the country will lose crucial donor support if they do not fulfil their obligations to reform the state.
17. Work toward building and galvanising support from civil society as a way of legitimising his position with the population and gearing attention to reconstruction efforts.

Freetown/Brussels, 30 January 2004

REBUILDING LIBERIA: PROSPECTS AND PERILS

I. INTRODUCTION

Disarming the estimated 48,000 to 58,000 combatants scattered throughout the country is the most critical component for stabilising Liberia. Getting it wrong, and repeating mistakes from Liberia's first civil war (1989-1996), could further harm the fragile peace. The United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) took a risk in starting disarmament in December 2003 without enough blue helmets on the ground and the right mechanisms in place. Operational difficulties, the lack of adequate planning, poor coordination, confusion over the distribution of funds for fighters and clashes between those loyal to the former Government of Liberia (GOL – now just one of three armed factions), and its peacekeepers led UNMIL to suspend the process initially until 20 January 2004 and then to late February.¹

But getting disarmament right is only half the battle that confronts UNMIL's political and military chiefs. Establishing democratic governance in Liberia is quite possibly the most difficult task if peace is to be sustained. The country has never known real democratic governance, and politicians seeking power today appear little better than Charles Taylor. In fact, the common phrase among civilians on the streets of Monrovia is "politics as usual". Taylor may have gone, but, ICG was told, "do not expect political behaviour to change overnight".²

This report examines the problems and challenges in Liberia's efforts to break out of a cycle of violence that has resulted in up to 250,000 deaths since 1989,

destabilising West Africa in the process.³ It spells out what is needed to keep Liberia from returning to chaos and to rebuild it.

Leadership squabbles in UNMIL, the slow pace of the early force deployments, uncertainty about funding for reintegration, concerns that the armed factions will be kept intact to fight in neighbouring wars, and internal divisions within LURD leading to splintering and factional struggles all undercut the chance for peace. There are daily reports of ceasefire violations and persistent reports of human rights abuses. It is important that troop-contributing countries continue the more rapid pace of deployment of recent weeks so that UNMIL can spread its security umbrella throughout the country. The timetable for implementing the peace is tight, and much is expected by the time elections are held in October 2005.

A number of areas and issues are competing for attention before those elections. Four areas require both domestic attention and international support: disarming and reintegrating the three factions, reforming the violent security sector, restructuring the government and addressing large-scale human rights violations. There are no guarantees that money and international assistance will bring stability. Much of the rebuilding effort will depend on Liberians themselves showing commitment to achieving a viable state, but "the problem of Liberia is beyond its capacity" and will, therefore, be heavily dependent on international goodwill.⁴ However, donor attention spans are short, and other conflict zones on the continent are already competing for attention. If a comprehensive peace agreement is signed in the Sudan, for example, it will place heavy additional strains on nations and

¹ The events surrounding the disarmament process on 7 December 2003 are discussed in detail below.

² ICG interview with Liberian lawyer, Monrovia, November 2003.

³ This is the second of two reports on the early stages of Liberia's peace process. See also ICG Africa Report N°71, *Liberia: Security Challenges*, 3 November 2003.

⁴ ICG interview with LURD minister, National Transitional Government of Liberia, Monrovia, November 2003.

institutions to find more troops and resources to help sustain another African peace process. The great pressures to assist Iraq may also increasingly impact on Liberia.⁵

II. SECURITY FIRST?

It is widely recognised that Liberia cannot safely be allowed to remain a failed state and that physical and political reconstruction will be essential to prevent future chaos in the West Africa region. The chances of rebuilding the country depend on how quickly UNMIL can deploy troops and disarm the fighters. However, the difficulties of establishing UNMIL around the country and ensuring disarmament have been all too evident. Unless both can happen more smoothly and quickly, leaders of armed factions will continue to undermine the transition and threaten the peace, and the prospects for rebuilding Liberia will be poor.

A. UNMIL DEPLOYMENT

As of mid-January 2004, some 9,000 UNMIL troops, out of the expected 15,000, were on the ground. UNMIL has now deployed in some of the key areas, including the LURD strongholds of Tubmanburg (Bomi County) and Gbargna (Bong County), and the territory in Buchanan (Grand Bassa County) and Zwedru (Grand Gedeh County) held by MODEL. The fiasco surrounding the December 2003 disarmament process has encouraged troop contributing countries to deploy faster but the slow pace of the original deployment has hampered both humanitarian assistance and getting the bulk of the UN civil administrators into every county, which is necessary to help rebuild infrastructure. The most evident consequence has been in the disarmament process, for which UNMIL did not have enough troops to cope with fighters entering cantonment sites.

According to a senior Western diplomat, UN member states “failed” to provide promised troops in adequate time⁶ but officials now hope UNMIL will reach its 15,000 authorised strength by late March.⁷ While the increased pace of deployments in the past several weeks is encouraging, the U.S., which airlifted the initial Nigerian troops to Liberia, could make another important contribution by offering to fly in and, where necessary, help equip the nearly 6,000 troops still missing so that UNMIL can reach its authorised strength a month ahead of this target.

⁵ In a statement on the future of peacekeeping on the African continent, the UN Undersecretary General for Peacekeeping, Jean-Marie Guehenno, raised concerns about competition for troops in Iraq and Afghanistan and the commitment of UN member states to peacekeeping missions in Burundi, Côte d’Ivoire and Sudan. See “UN Peacekeeping Chief Warns Of 2004 Troop Shortage”, *Financial Times*, 18 December 2003.

⁶ ICG interview, Freetown, December 2003.

⁷ ICG interviews with UNMIL officials, Monrovia and Freetown, November-December 2003.

The Secretary General's December 2003 report was explicit in its frustration over the consequences of lost time for the mission's mandate:

All in all, the process of generating troops for UNMIL has not been completely satisfactory. Member States have not been forthcoming with offers of sorely needed specialised units, in particular attack helicopters and signals units. Some Member States have requested changes in the timelines for the deployment of their troops, while others have withdrawn offers of troops after conducting reconnaissance missions to Liberia ... All these factors have resulted in slippages in the Mission's deployment schedule, which will have an adverse impact on the implementation of the disarmament, demobilisation, reintegration and repatriation program and other key aspects of the overall peace process.⁸

UNMIL's slower than anticipated deployment means that it is unable to deal effectively with sporadic fighting and the ongoing looting and harassment of civilians. The pace has also raised alarm about the prospects for future peacekeeping missions on the continent:

The slow response from Member States to the Mission's troop requirements raises concern ... also for the planning for possible future peacekeeping operations in Africa, including Burundi, Côte d'Ivoire and the Sudan.⁹

Notably, UNMIL is unable to monitor Liberia's borders effectively. Previous ICG reporting has raised concerns about the possible movement of fighters and their weapons to Côte d'Ivoire, Guinea or Sierra Leone.¹⁰ Since then, ICG has learned that LURD tried to move heavy weapons to Sierra Leone, three trucks reportedly being sent there in November 2003.¹¹ LURD activities in Sierra Leone are traditionally sustained by that country's Kamajor

civil defence force. The UN mission (UNAMSIL) has been increasing its border activities since October 2003. In November, under "Operation Blue Vigilance", it conducted extensive monitoring from the north (the Guinean border) to the south, including Bowaterside and the Mano River Bridge on the Liberia border, using land, air and sea forces. The first phase involved collecting data, air and ground reconnaissance, and checking for unofficial crossing points. The current phase involves closer monitoring of movements between Liberia and Sierra Leone.¹²

Similarly, there are still concerns that the MODEL leadership is maintaining its fighters in case Côte d'Ivoire's president, Laurent Gbagbo, needs them to fight against *Forces Nouvelles* insurgents in the north of his country. A MODEL politician said, "we do not discount the possibility of MODEL still being used to fight in Côte d'Ivoire".¹³ A key MODEL financier added, "we don't have to be secretive about it. All we have to do is fly in MODEL fighters when President Gbagbo asks for further assistance".¹⁴ UNMIL officials informed ICG of the recruitment of Liberians, assumed to be from MODEL, for service in Côte d'Ivoire.¹⁵ MODEL fighters in Nimba County are continually trying to push GOL fighters out of the area, which would put them in a strategic position to move into Côte d'Ivoire should Gbagbo need them. UNMIL's ability to monitor the borders is limited by troop strength. On the Ivorian side, French forces (*Opération Licorne*) have pushed close to the border but their movement is often restricted to the demilitarised confidence zone in the west that does not reach to Liberia. Similarly, the UN Mission in Côte d'Ivoire (MINUCI) has limited range in monitoring the borders with Liberia.

The International Contact Group on Liberia established on 17 September 2002 to deal with a peace process is set to meet during the February donors conference. While it is to look specifically at Liberian political issues, regional security is "likely to creep into the discussions".¹⁶ A key issue that needs to be discussed is what will be in place in

⁸ "First progress report of the Secretary General on the United Nations Mission in Liberia", United Nations Security Council, S/2003/1175, 15 December 2003, para. 7, p. 2.

⁹ *Ibid.*, para. 63, p. 14. A similar view was expressed by the Undersecretary General for Peacekeeping, Jean-Marie Guehenno. See "UN Peacekeeping Chief Warns", *op. cit.*

¹⁰ ICG Report, *Liberia: Security Challenges*, *op. cit.*, pp. 8, 10-11, 17-19.

¹¹ ICG interviews with UNMIL and UNAMSIL officials, Freetown, December 2003, confirmed in telephone conversation with Western diplomat, January 2004.

¹² ICG interviews with UNAMSIL and UNMIL military and civilian officials, Freetown, December 2003-January 2004.

¹³ ICG interview with MODEL politician, Monrovia, November 2003.

¹⁴ ICG interview with key financier of MODEL, November 2003.

¹⁵ ICG interview with UNMIL official, Freetown, December 2003.

¹⁶ ICG interview with senior Western diplomat, January 2003.

Liberia by the time the UN Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL) finally draws down in December 2004.¹⁷ After a spate of disciplinary problems within Sierra Leone's military (RSLAF¹⁸), there are growing concerns that its borders will be vulnerable should LURD continue to treat that country as a base.

But the border between Côte d'Ivoire and Liberia, especially close to Nimba County on the Liberia side, creates the most problems. Reports of continued ethnic exactions in the west of Côte d'Ivoire and attempted movement by Taylor forces into Danané on the Ivorian side indicate that the UN missions in this part of West Africa (Côte d'Ivoire, Liberia and Sierra Leone) still have a long way to go in managing border security.

B. DISARMAMENT AND DEMOBILISATION

UNMIL's action plan for disarmament and reintegration (DR) covers at least three or four phases running late into 2004.¹⁹ UNMIL successfully launched a symbolic weapons destruction program on 1 December 2003 with arms surrendered by former government militias. But its image was dented following the fiasco surrounding the premature start of the disarmament program on 7 December.²⁰ The whole process was badly managed. The plan was to erect three cantonment sites and target 1,000 combatants from each of the three warring faction. Fighters were expected to stay at the sites for three weeks to undergo orientation and

interviews for reintegration and receive an initial stipend for resettlement.²¹

Although it is not entirely clear how 7 December was chosen as the starting date, the SRSG was determined to advance the disarmament process forcefully despite cautions from diplomats and others that the mission had insufficient troops to provide camp security. There may also have been some concern that if the U.S.\$245 million Washington had allocated for Liberian peacekeeping, specifically disarmament, was not showing signs of being dispersed in a steady and effective manner, other claimants for the money would appear.²² The pace was probably also intended to impress donors ahead of the February conference and encourage faster funding for the peace process. As a senior UNMIL official informed ICG, "everyone was expecting results quickly to show UNMIL readiness before the donors".²³ A serious lack of communication, organisation, control and coordination was evident within UNMIL and between it and UN agencies including the World Food Programme (WFP), the High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the Development Program (UNDP) and the Children's Fund (UNICEF) as well as the World Bank and international non-governmental organisations (INGOs).²⁴ In interviews with them, ICG was repeatedly told that UN agencies and INGOs were not logistically or operationally ready to meet UNMIL's requirement for disarmament.²⁵

Moreover, ICG has been informed that UNMIL political and military officials vital to the disarmament program did not even meet until shortly before 7 December and decided on full

¹⁷ A UN team will arrive in Sierra Leone in the first week of February 2004 to conduct a security assessment before the four-year old UNAMSIL is scaled down.

¹⁸ The Republic of Sierra Leone Armed Forces

¹⁹ The first phase (October-December 2003) involved the design of the DR action plan. Phases two to four cover its implementation.

²⁰ There are a number of people within and outside UNMIL who contend that UNMIL started the disarmament process earlier than the 18 August 2003 Accra agreement stipulated. The peace agreement is somewhat vague and open to interpretation. It states that implementation of disarmament should start 60 days after the inauguration of the NTGL on 14 October 2003, which would have meant 13 December 2003. Later, however, its timetable indicates that "disbandment and disarmament of all large calibre weapons" should start 90 days after, by 11 January 2004. ICG interviews with UNMIL representatives and various warring factions, Monrovia and Freetown, November-December 2003.

²¹ "First progress report of the Secretary-General", op. cit., para. 18, p. 5.

²² There are differing accounts about the motivations for the decision to press forward in early December. Some diplomats and officials in Liberia told ICG that the SRSG was under pressure from the U.S. side. Officials in Washington told ICG they were either neutral or cautionary but in any event prepared to go along with the decision of the SRSG on the ground. It is indeed possible that different signals were being sent by different individuals or offices.

²³ ICG interview, December 2003.

²⁴ ICG interviews, December 2003.

²⁵ In another interview, ICG was informed that INGOs wanted a quick start to disarmament but were surprised and probably caught off guard when UNMIL chose to begin on 7 December. ICG interview with senior Western diplomat, January 2004.

details only two days before the start date.²⁶ UNMIL military officials warned that they were not ready and requested a delay to provide the necessary security around camps. The original plan for sites in the LURD and MODEL strongholds of Tubmanburg and Buchanan respectively, and Camp Scheiffelin outside Monrovia, for GOL fighters, was revised following a request by UNMIL military that, based on its troop size, it could only realistically focus on the GOL fighters, many of whom had already come forward for disarmament. As there were already 7,000 GOL fighters in Camp Scheiffelin with their families, UNMIL military had to create another site to deal with the many fighters still volunteering. Also, LURD fighters continued to deny access to Tubmanburg until they gained more positions in the transitional government.

On the starting day, many GOL fighters came to Camp Scheiffelin but “UNMIL peacekeepers found it impossible to disarm them” because they were not ready.²⁷ To add to UNMIL’s dilemma, “the food on offer to the fighters was poor in quality and the water was not enough”.²⁸ Initially transportation was not available for fighters, and many walked through the streets of Monrovia brandishing their guns. GOL fighters grew restless outside Camp Scheiffelin when they discovered that there was no “cash for weapons”.²⁹ “The result was chaos”, senior UNMIL officials told ICG.³⁰ Riots broke out and road blocks were erected as fighters demonstrated against UNMIL troops. From 7 to 9 December 2003, Monrovia witnessed looting, including cars stolen and heavy shooting, particularly in the red light district (Paynesville), home to GOL fighters. The result was nine dead (suspected GOL) and one wounded UNMIL peacekeeper. The chairman of the National Transitional Government of Liberia (NTGL), Gyude Bryant, imposed a curfew. An UNMIL official said to ICG, “for the first time since we arrived, riots occurred in the heart of Monrovia, and it was our fault”.³¹

The UN has stated that there was “misunderstanding among the combatants about the benefits they were to receive” once they disarmed.³² But ICG was informed by a senior UNMIL official that UNMIL itself contributed to the misunderstanding by not ensuring that the fighters were properly informed when they would receive money.³³ Money arrived on Wednesday 10 December which was apparently made available by UNAMSIL in Sierra Leone.³⁴ 400 fighters received it, and by 17 December half those disarmed had been paid U.S.\$75 each. There was further confusion when it was discovered that some fighters who were not given identity cards and avoided entering Camp Scheiffelin had come forward more than once to collect money. Most fighters apparently believed disarmament was available only on 7 December, but there was no clarification. As a result of the poor planning, UNMIL suspended the program on 17 December until the end of February.

UNMIL claimed that the huge turn-out in December – up to 12,000 GOL fighters and several hundred MODEL – was a sign of success.³⁵ By mid-January, it had collected at least 8,600 weapons. Officials described the December operation as a “pilot scheme”,³⁶ but a senior UNMIL official admitted, “we were unprepared and we lacked organisation and information”.³⁷ Western diplomats and other UN officials called the start “premature”.³⁸ A frustrated senior UNMIL official added, “I hope that by the time we resume ... we would have made proper arrangements rather than bulldozing our way through”.³⁹ Another exasperated UNMIL official commented to ICG that, “we can only expect better things in the future or it will be war”.⁴⁰ The poor beginning also highlighted the fact that Monrovia is not as safe as was initially thought. In October 2003, ahead of the inauguration of transitional government, UNMIL declared the capital a “weapons-free zone”,

²⁶ ICG interviews, December 2003.

²⁷ ICG interview, December 2003.

²⁸ ICG interviews, December 2003.

²⁹ ICG interview, January 2004.

³⁰ ICG interviews, December 2003-January 2004.

³¹ ICG interview with UNMIL official, December 2003. The same UNMIL official went on to state “Firing was taking place in Broad Street in the centre on town, something that had not happened for a long time. Even in the Mamba Point area close to the U.S. Embassy, the security was tense and UNMIL staff did not feel safe”.

³² “First progress report of the Secretary-General”, op. cit., para. 10, p. 3.

³³ ICG interview with UNMIL official, December 2003.

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ By 23 December, UNMIL had collected 8,683 weapons and registered 13,195 ex-combatants.

³⁶ ICG interview with senior UNMIL official, December 2003.

³⁷ ICG interview, December 2003.

³⁸ ICG interviews with Western diplomats and UN officials, Freetown, January 2004.

³⁹ ICG interview, December 2003.

⁴⁰ ICG interview with senior UNMIL official, December 2003.

but as a senior UNMIL official noted after the disarmament fiasco, “I was amazed because Monrovia was supposed to be arms free, but there are arms everywhere and in the surrounding vicinities”.⁴¹

In an ideal world, UNMIL should have waited several months until troops, funds, logistics and better preparations were in place. But it was also important to start disarming sooner rather than later. Fighters were growing increasingly restless, and there were reports of attempts to smuggle arms to Liberia’s neighbours. A number of GOL fighters had already turned in arms, and a decision was taken to maintain this momentum. Expectations were high among the fighters and disputes within the factions suggested UNMIL had to seize the opportunity without delay.⁴² The key to securing Liberia lies in getting weapons away from the fighters.⁴³ UNMIL must not make another mistake when disarmament resumes or the consequences could be much worse than on 8 December when some GOL fighters fired at the building that houses the SRSB and his civilian staff in protest. Next time, one UNMIL official remarked, “people will march on Monrovia”.⁴⁴

Ordinary Liberians, who want to see guns off the streets, still have confidence in UNMIL, and the fighters retain a degree of respect especially for the military, but there is a lack of confidence in UNMIL political leaders. Ordinary Liberians like UNMIL. They see Klein as “their advocate”⁴⁵ and do not want warlords dictating the peace, but they are worried that UNMIL has given the fighters new chances. Much will need to be done to restore their confidence.⁴⁶ According to a senior UNMIL official, the poor start to disarmament was good news for Charles Taylor and his commanders. “Taylor will

look at the situation with glee and wonder whether he can cause additional problems for UNMIL”.⁴⁷

The December events should have sent a serious warning to UNMIL that it needs to take greater care in managing Liberia’s peace. Deputy SRSB Souren Seraydarian acknowledged mistakes in speaking about the need for proper controls when disarmament resumes: “The commanders will be accompanying their units in an organized manner to the disarmament sites with their units not exceeding 200-250 persons a day in order to prevent some of the occurrences that happened before”. He added that UNMIL is “working with all the parties concerned as well as the government in assessing the outcome of the disarmament so far achieved and the ways to improve the security and safety during the next phase of the disarmament”.⁴⁸

Expectations are high at UN headquarters in New York. As an UNMIL official said, “everybody is talking about UNMIL as the start of a new style in UN peace missions”, primarily because of its rapid civilian deployment and success in drawing existing UN personnel from UNAMSIL to start up. Liberia is not large and has no more than 3.3 million people. There will be over 1,500 UN civilian personnel working on the peace process, and 1,115 civilian police to establish law and order, “so how can it fail”?⁴⁹

While it is not unusual for complaints of the following kind to be made in such situations, and they should not necessarily be taken at face value, a number of people have privately told ICG that a key problem that needs to be resolved is lack of cohesion at the top of UNMIL, particularly between its civilian and military wings. A senior Western diplomat remarked, “establishing proper lines of communication between UNMIL political and military staff seems rather painful”.⁵⁰ There is a notable division between Klein and his team largely from the Balkans and the rest of the mission, leading some in UNMIL to claim that “a culture of them and us is tearing the mission apart”.⁵¹ Numerous UNMIL staff and Western diplomats interviewed have

⁴¹ ICG interview, December 2003.

⁴² ICG interview with senior Western diplomat, Freetown, December 2003.

⁴³ Since the suspension of disarmament in December, rebel leaders have been reporting the voluntary disarming of their fighters. MODEL reported on 2 January 2004 that their forces in the southeast of the country (Sinoe, Grand Bassa, Grand Gedeh, and Maryland counties) had voluntarily disarmed. Former GOL forces also reported on 2 January that their commanders had begun disarming militia in Nimba County, including dismantling checkpoints in several towns in Nimba, including Sanniquellie, Ganta, Kahnlay, and Saglepie. LURD fighters have not yet begun voluntary disarmament.

⁴⁴ ICG interview with senior UNMIL official, December 2003.

⁴⁵ ICG interview with Liberian civil society representative, Monrovia, November 2003.

⁴⁶ ICG interview with senior UNMIL official, December 2003.

⁴⁷ ICG interview, December 2003.

⁴⁸ “UN Rethinks Disarmament Program”, UN Integrated Regional Information Network, 7 January 2004.

⁴⁹ ICG interview with senior UNMIL official, Freetown, December 2003.

⁵⁰ ICG interview, January 2003.

⁵¹ ICG interviews, December 2003-January 2004.

referred to a lack of understanding of African politics and culture among several SRSNG advisors.⁵² The housing of UNMIL civilians and military in separate buildings (at least a 30-minute drive apart) will also need to be resolved quickly.⁵³

UNMIL can help itself by making planning for disarmament and reintegration more inclusive of Liberians. So far, it is driving the peace process, and the chairman of the transitional government looks like a symbolic figure without much say or responsibility. The peace agreement clearly devolves power to the NGTL, especially for reintegration. Other Liberians, including religious and civil society activists and political figures, should be brought in more prominently.

C. REINTEGRATION

Some 48,000 to 58,000 fighters must be disarmed, then reintegrated into the security sector or society at large. As a senior UNMIL official noted, “disarmament is the smallest part of the peace process while reintegration will be huge. We will be in an uncertain world because there will not be enough money or agencies” to assist in providing training, skills and vocational education.⁵⁴ MODEL made its position clear when its chairman, Thomas Yaya Nimley, declared that its fighters would not disarm for rice and the U.S.\$300 on offer.⁵⁵

An effective reintegration strategy will be critical for breaking the chain of command between fighters and their political masters and returning fighters to their homes. But if they have nothing to gain from reintegration, fighters are more likely to resort to crime and looting, already widespread activities, or look to other regional wars. As a senior MODEL leader stated, “there are fifteen million people boiled over in Ivory Coast, and if you do not deliver an

adequate reintegration package our fighters will go over there to fight”.⁵⁶

Reintegration will be the standard by which fighters and ordinary Liberians judge UNMIL and international commitment to peace. There have been concerns that some donors are not looking at DR in its totality and developing concrete plans beyond “road reconstruction”.⁵⁷ Reintegration is a long-term matter that must be linked to jump starting the economy and give fighters hope of better prospects. Initial reports suggest that the U.S., which has committed a total of \$200 million for non-peacekeeping efforts in Liberia, plans to concentrate a substantial portion of the first tranche (perhaps 50 per cent of \$114 million) on community-based reintegration of ex-combatants, refugees and IDPs. The remainder of the \$200 million would then be programmed to fill gaps after the responses from other donors were in hand.⁵⁸ This is encouraging because unless there are clear signs of how the UN and donors will provide a solid reintegration package and offer chances for a better life outside the bush, including vocational training, school education and, ultimately, jobs, UNMIL will struggle to convince fighters to give up their arms.

⁵² ICG interviews with UNMIL officials and Western diplomats, November 2003-January 2004.

⁵³ Discussions have been underway since October 2003 to bring them together in one building.

⁵⁴ ICG interview with senior UNMIL official, Freetown, December 2003.

⁵⁵ Also see, “We will not disarm for rice MODEL Chairman tells the UN”, *The Telegraph* (Monrovia), 25 November 2003, p. 8.

⁵⁶ ICG interview with senior MODEL minister, National Transitional Government of Liberia, Monrovia, November 2003.

⁵⁷ ICG interview with senior Western diplomat, January 2004.

⁵⁸ ICG interview with U.S. officials, Washington, January 2004.

III. POTENTIAL SPOILERS

The peace process depends importantly on the commitment of the former warring factions and their leaders.⁵⁹ There have been continuous reports of violations of the 17 June Accra ceasefire agreement and attempts by fighters, particularly from LURD, to bring weapons into Monrovia. Ceasefire violations recorded by UNMIL in October and November 2003 alone included sporadic fighting in Nimba (Sagleipie, Tapeta and Gloie) and Grand Bassa (Compound One in the outskirts of Buchanan) counties between GOL and MODEL, leading to displacement of many civilians. LURD fighters were also involved in looting in Bensonville, close to Monrovia on 15 November, as well as attempts to carry weapons into the city either on women or inside coffins.⁶⁰ These violations are indications that UNMIL needs to step up monitoring of checkpoints and movement of people into the capital. Of the two former insurgent groups, LURD has been the most troublesome. MODEL is considered less problematic but may simply be shrewder. MODEL leaders tend to appear to accept UNMIL requests, knowing that LURD fighters are more likely to scupper the peace process.⁶¹ GOL fighters are largely on the defensive.⁶²

Additionally, there are increasing concerns about rebel leaders' interpretation of the Accra peace agreement. It is "inevitable", according to one diplomat, that faction leaders would think the peace process is only about them, since the agreement, despite the other signatories, was essentially a deal among warring factions.⁶³ Mediators, however, had hoped it would ultimately unify the country. For now, this is wishful thinking.

LURD and MODEL leaders have decided that Liberia and all top government positions are theirs by right of conquest. Finding a way to break their capacity to spoil the peace is essential for the success of UNMIL's plan to disarm and reintegrate the fighters. The warlords – political and military

leaders of the three factions – are the most dangerous people in Liberia and need to be warned continually that they will be held accountable for ceasefire violations and attacks against civilians.

Attempts by the warlords to block the start of disarmament in support of claims for posts in the NTGL were a clear indication of their lack of commitment to the peace process. Politicians associated with armed factions, including former fighters from the Taylor government (GOL), banded together to walk out of the first meeting of the National Commission for Disarmament, Demobilisation, Rehabilitation and Reintegration (NCDDRR) on 27 November 2003,⁶⁴ stating that unresolved problems over the allocation of posts meant that the process could not proceed.⁶⁵ Their attitude can best be described as "individual corporate greed".⁶⁶ Their fiefdoms will have to be "crushed".⁶⁷ In October and November 2003, LURD even blocked UNMIL access to areas under its control and refused to participate in disarmament talks until the issue of jobs in the NTGL was addressed.⁶⁸ They maintained this position until 3 December, four days before the date set for the start of disarmament process.

ICG has warned for months that LURD could present the biggest threat to the peace, an assessment that UNMIL officials seem to be coming to share.⁶⁹ But since they reached Monrovia in October 2003, the priority of both LURD and MODEL leaders has been to secure positions for themselves, leaving the future of their fighters in doubt. Their interests are basic – power, money and self-aggrandisement – but they are in a precarious situation. Many of the political leaders have been promoted to positions for which they are ill-suited⁷⁰ and have made promises

⁵⁹ ICG Report, *Liberia: Security Challenges*, op. cit.

⁶⁰ ICG interviews with UNMIL and Liberian civil society representatives, Monrovia, November-December 2003. Also see, "First progress report of the Secretary-General", op. cit., paras. 12-14, pp. 3-4.

⁶¹ ICG interview with UNMIL military official, January 2004.

⁶² See below for further information on the GOL position.

⁶³ ICG interview with senior Western diplomat, Monrovia, November 2003.

⁶⁴ NCDDRR is tasked with providing policy guidance and coordination of all disarmament and reintegration activities. It is composed of representatives from the interim government, LURD, MODEL, ECOWAS, the UN and the International Contact Group for Liberia.

⁶⁵ One MODEL minister in the NTGL stated to ICG, "We will not disarm before satisfying" demands for more jobs.

⁶⁶ ICG interview with UNMIL military official, Monrovia, November 2003.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ LURD also blocked international humanitarian agencies from delivering assistance in territories it controlled.

⁶⁹ ICG interviews with UNMIL military and political officials, Monrovia and Freetown, November-December 2003.

⁷⁰ Many former insurgents appointed to positions in the transitional government are said to lack the skills to manage their ministries. ICG interview with Liberian civil society leader, Monrovia, November 2003.

to their fighters that they cannot keep. The top LURD and MODEL figures have secured power for themselves and enjoy life in Monrovia, but there are simply not enough jobs in the capital to go around.⁷¹

Internal divisions and bitterness have grown in both groups, particularly the LURD, as fighters see their leaders driving fancy cars in the city while they remain in the bush with uncertain prospects.⁷² As one UNMIL military official stated, “the fighters have seen the way politicians have sold them up the creek. There is something rotten in their behaviour. They are being so explicit”. If the UN “is not careful, it will be 1996 all over again”,⁷³ a reference to when warring leaders battled in the heart of Monrovia in defiance of peace attempts. None of the faction politicians have any vision of how to govern Liberia. One LURD politician admitted to ICG, “we are people ruling by terror”.⁷⁴

If UNMIL, through an information campaign, can manage to show the self-interested nature of the faction leaders, it might possibly break the link between leaders and fighters and relieve pressure on the transitional government, which is hostage to the demands of the former rebels. UNMIL needs to demonstrate that the warring factions are acting in bad faith, are unwilling to compromise and “prefer to hold the country to ransom because of jobs”.⁷⁵ The leaderships of the two main warring factions are increasingly vulnerable – LURD’s Sekou Conneh is out in the cold and MODEL’s Thomas Nimley is not trusted – while Taylor’s former fighters (GOL), are only too pleased to disarm for money after receiving no pay for up to eighteen months. But such internal divisions and instability also pose a threat to the peace. As a senior UNMIL official stated, “we need to ... ensure that [the troublemakers] are sidelined”.⁷⁶

A. CHAIRMAN SEKOU DAMATE CONNEH (LURD)

One leader who might already be sidelined is Sekou Damate Conneh. A LURD politician stated, “Conneh wants to know who he is, where he is going and where his future lies”.⁷⁷ Conneh still maintains ambitions for taking power in Monrovia, and his entourage often refers to him as “president”.⁷⁸ ICG understands that he had planned to transport arms and ammunition by boat from Conakry to bombard Monrovia during June and July 2003.⁷⁹ Since the signing of the Accra peace agreement, his biggest challenge has been how to deliver on the empty promises he made to his large entourage. Conneh has lost the respect of his fighters. He is, as an UNMIL military official said, “not a military man”.⁸⁰ He avoids the garrison town of Tubmanburg (LURD headquarters) and has remained in Conakry fearing for his life in Liberia.⁸¹

Conneh’s political vulnerability has been apparent since October 2003. His non-participation in the NTGL had already been perceived as a sign LURD was in trouble. Some observers interpreted his decision to refuse a post while the MODEL chairman, Thomas Yaya Nimley, entered government as frustration at not being made head of the transitional government. LURD members of the NTGL have taken to distancing themselves. Many are “not on good terms with Conneh” because he has “tended to ignore our advice”.⁸² LURD ministers ignored Conneh’s call in late January 2004 for Chairman Gyude Bryant to step down following his accusation that Bryant was undermining the peace process. Conneh was supposed to attend the preparatory meeting for the launching of the disarmament process but he refused, though Klein and UNMIL Force Commander Daniel Opande went to Conakry to urge him to return to Monrovia. His absence during critical months has further undermined his credibility with his military

⁷¹ ICG interviews with senior civilian minister in the National Transitional Government of Liberia, Monrovia, November 2003 and with senior Western diplomat, Freetown, December 2003.

⁷² ICG interview, January 2003.

⁷³ ICG interview with UNMIL military official, Monrovia, November 2003.

⁷⁴ ICG interview with LURD minister, National Transitional Government of Liberia, Monrovia, November 2003.

⁷⁵ ICG interview with senior UNMIL military official, Monrovia, November 2003.

⁷⁶ ICG interview, Monrovia, November 2003.

⁷⁷ ICG interview with LURD minister, National Transitional Government of Liberia, Monrovia, November 2003.

⁷⁸ ICG interview with UNMIL military official, Monrovia, November 2003.

⁷⁹ ICG interview with LURD minister, National Transitional Government of Liberia, Monrovia, November 2003.

⁸⁰ ICG interview with UNMIL military official, Monrovia, December 2003.

⁸¹ Sekou Conneh was also in Dakar, Senegal, at the start of January 2004.

⁸² ICG interview with LURD minister, National Transitional Government of Liberia, Monrovia, November 2003.

commanders. The struggle of the warring factions to get more government jobs “is about looting and if you are not on the ground you cannot control your boys”, an UNMIL official commented.⁸³

On 8 January 2004, up to 40 LURD commanders signed a statement vowing to replace Conneh by his wife, Ayesha Keita Conneh, who is considered more powerful than her husband. Ayesha’s rise to influence in Guinea, and, with it, power within LURD, came by virtue of her close links with President Lansana Conté.⁸⁴ Ayesha has supported her husband’s ousting. Her decision might be linked to the fact that Sekou chose his former brother-in-law, Lusinee Kamara, from his first marriage, as minister of finance in the NTGL. As one LURD politician said, “Ayesha did not help create LURD only to see her husband’s former wife’s family take up positions in government”.⁸⁵

It is not entirely clear who now controls LURD. On the military side, Mohammed Aliyu “Cobra” Sheriff has been the point of contact for UNMIL. As LURD’s chief of staff, he announced the new military high command. When the National Executive Committee (NEC), LURD’s decision-making body, was dismantled, most of the old personalities were retained but Conneh was removed as LURD chairman. It is hard to identify the centre of gravity on the political side. Ayesha might be the main focus of attention but how she is accepted by many in the movement is not yet known. It is also not clear whether she has personal political ambitions.⁸⁶ The fact that she is a Mandingo may not endear her to many in Liberia, as Mandingos are generally thought of as foreigners from Guinea despite their long presence in Liberia. Sekou Conneh’s vice-chairman for administration and now managing director of the National Port Authority, Chayee Doe, might become the key LURD

political negotiator.⁸⁷ The speaker of the Transitional National Assembly, George Dweh, has become prominent for verbal attacks against UNMIL.

B. CHAIRMAN THOMAS YAYA NIMLEY AND THE “BOYS FROM PHILADELPHIA” (MODEL)

Chairman Thomas Yaya Nimley has managed to maintain his position as leader of MODEL, but only just. He, too, has had to battle hard to keep the support of his fighters, but many do not trust him since they fear that he is constrained from representing their interests while fully employed in the NTGL as foreign minister.⁸⁸

Nimley and his political colleagues have little real control over MODEL fighters. In November 2003, a number of fighters warned the politicians that they would remove them if they did not put their interests first. MODEL’s chief negotiator at the Accra peace talks and head of the Bureau of Maritime Affairs, J. Denis Slanger, fled to London in apparent fear for his life.⁸⁹

Nimley is described as a firm and level-headed person who “wants things to be done right”,⁹⁰ but he must deal with his fellow MODEL politicians, many of whom have little in common with the fighters.⁹¹ The core of the political leadership, particularly those who have secured seats in the NTGL, have been out of Liberia for years and are ignorant of its complex circumstances. Nimley’s political team is often referred to as the “boys from Philadelphia” where many lived before he recruited them. They are arrogant, constantly speak of their financial success, educational attainment and accomplishments in the U.S., and tend to dismiss the fighters as mere boys.

⁸³ ICG interview with UNMIL official, January 2004.

⁸⁴ Her fortune telling skills, for example forecasting a coup attempt against Conté in 1996, enabled her to replace his previous clairvoyant. Ayesha’s closeness to Conté also benefited LURD as Conté provided weapons through Ayesha via her home in Conakry. On Ayesha role in the LURD, see ICG Africa Reports N°43, *Liberia: The Key to Ending Regional Instability*, 24 April 2002, p. 10; N°62, *Tackling Liberia: The Eye of the Regional Storm*, 30 April 2003, p. 11; and N°71, *Liberia: Security Challenges*, op. cit., p. 9. On LURD’s association with Guinea, see also ICG Africa Report N°74, *Guinée : incertitudes autour d’une fin de règne*, 19 décembre 2003.

⁸⁵ ICG interview, Monrovia, November 2003.

⁸⁶ ICG interview with former LURD politician, Conakry, February 2003.

⁸⁷ Chayee Doe is the younger brother of the former Liberian president, Samuel Doe.

⁸⁸ ICG interview with MODEL minister, National Transitional Government of Liberia, Monrovia, November 2003.

⁸⁹ Slanger was allegedly involved in siphoning money from the Bureau and accused of involvement in illicit business. ICG interview with MODEL politician, Monrovia, November 2003.

⁹⁰ ICG interview with UNMIL military official, Monrovia, November 2003.

⁹¹ ICG interview with LURD minister, National Transitional Government of Liberia, Monrovia, November 2003.

C. CHARLES TAYLOR'S COMMANDERS (GOL)

Rumours continue to circulate about links between Charles Taylor, living since 11 August 2003 in exile in Calabar, Nigeria, and his key commanders. However, no verifiable evidence has been produced either by UNMIL or other security agencies. Nevertheless, Taylor's capacity to disrupt the peace should not be underestimated.⁹² His presence in Calabar remains a significant threat. Many ordinary Liberians will not be persuaded the peace process is sustainable unless he is arrested and brought before the Special Court for Sierra Leone to stand trial on his indictment for war crimes committed during that country's conflict.⁹³

In the meantime, the role of Taylor's key commanders raises concerns primarily because they and many of their fighters are based in Monrovia and its surrounding areas. Several top Taylor generals could still wield power among former government soldiers and militias, including Roland Duo, Aldophus Dolo ("Peanut Butter") and Kuku Denis.⁹⁴ Dolo is seen as the most troublesome. UNMIL reports that he is in constant communication with fighters in Nimba County despite that fact that UNMIL Commander General Opande went there to remove him from the area late in November 2003. He is also said to be in communication with Taylor's top commander and chief executioner, Benjamin Yeaten, believed to be in Ghana.

Another key commander is General Koffie, a former bodyguard to Daniel Chea, Taylor's ex-defence minister, who currently holds that position in the transitional government. Koffie has been living in Rivercess County in the southeast since November 2003, but despite claims that he wants to disarm them, his estimated 1,000 fighters have clashed with MODEL. Another commander, General Gonda, is reportedly in communication with Yeaten three to

four times daily.⁹⁵ Closer scrutiny is needed of all these commanders.

Some rumours seem to echo how Taylor launched his insurgency in 1989. For example, ICG was informed that Taylor wanted to transfer weapons to Yekepa in Nimba County via Danané in Côte d'Ivoire. There were claims and counterclaims of fighters disguising themselves as refugees and crossing into Danané to liaise with the Ivorian northern-based rebel group, *Forces Nouvelles*. The alleged plan was for arms to be transported to the north, for strikes at pro-LURD Guinea and inside Liberia. The principle actors were supposedly Yeaten, Taylor's son, Chucky, and Dolo. In the south, in Grand Bassa County, Kuku Denis was also reportedly in communication with Charles Taylor to implement an attack on Monrovia. It is hard to know whether this plan was real but the clashes between MODEL and GOL fighters in Nimba County, Buchanan and Compound One (Grand Bassa) in late 2003 indicate attempts by both sides to win territory.

However, Taylor's die-hard commanders may not find many fighters willing to continue the struggle for the former president's return. At least 7,000 chose to disarm prior to the official start of the program on 7 December 2003, and a further 12,000 came forward that month. Many have not been paid for nearly two years and have to find food for themselves, so the disarmament process is attractive. In addition, as a senior UNMIL official stated, "GOL fighters are in a tight corner and constantly under threat from the LURD or MODEL".⁹⁶ To his credit, the force commander, Opande, has tried to undercut the potential for Taylor commanders to spoil the peace.⁹⁷ His decision to take Kuku Denis and Roland Duo up to Nimba County to appeal to GOL fighters and to remove Dolo to Monrovia, where he could be closely watched has paid off. It led to 800 GOL fighters going to Camp Scheffelin outside Monrovia to wait for official disarmament. Opande is virtually "a one man army":⁹⁸ in the manner of a classic African chief, he calls the fighters his sons, listens to their demands and warns them against disobeying the

⁹² In a number of ICG interviews with UNMIL military and other security officials linked to diplomatic agencies, none has provided concrete evidence or shed light on accusations that Taylor is in constant communication with his commanders.

⁹³ A number of individuals repeated to ICG, it "cannot be good for the country" that the Taylor question remains unanswered. ICG interviews with local NGO representative and private individuals, Monrovia, November 2003. Also see "Country Report: Liberia", The Economist Intelligence Unit, December 2003, p. 14.

⁹⁴ For a profile of these commanders, see ICG Report, *Liberia: Security Challenges*, op. cit., p. 8.

⁹⁵ ICG interview, Monrovia, November 2003.

⁹⁶ ICG interview, Monrovia, November 2003.

⁹⁷ General Daniel Opande is from Kenya. He had served as force commander during the earlier UN mission to Liberia in the 1990s and then held the same position for the UN in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL) from late 2000.

⁹⁸ ICG interview with UNMIL civilian and military officials, November 2003.

chief.⁹⁹ But with the slow UNMIL deployment, Opande and his peacekeepers will find it difficult to keep an eye on all the troublesome leaders.

IV. THE NATIONAL TRANSITIONAL GOVERNMENT OF LIBERIA

Peace must be underpinned not only by a strong security component, but also a clearly defined political process. There can be little optimism on this score, however, when the political process is in the hands of the National Transitional Government. Its performance since its inauguration on 14 October 2003 has highlighted the frailty of the political situation and raised questions regarding its capacity to manage large reconstruction programs such as restoring basic services, reconciliation and leading Liberia to free and fair elections in October 2005.

The choice of Gyude Bryant to head the NTGL, a businessman nominated by the warring factions in Accra in August 2003, generated some positive feeling.¹⁰⁰ The idea was for a solid technocrat to lead the transition. The SRSG, Klein, envisaged that such an interim government would focus on basic service issues such as health and education.¹⁰¹ If it was unable, Klein intended to take control. However, the character of the transitional government makes it impossible to see how its leaders can be trusted to lay any foundation for state-building. The NTGL is not filled with “people who are trained in the business of governance. Politicians in the NTGL do not have a sense of urgency of how to take the country forward, so we should expect business as usual”.¹⁰² The NTGL has just two years in which to implement the Accra peace agreement, but several months have been lost in the fight for jobs, and Bryant appears to have lost the faith of key players in the process.

Two problems stand out – Bryant’s lack of power and the blatant greed of several rebel politicians.

¹⁰⁰ Gyude Bryant is 54, from the Grebo ethnic group in the south part of Liberia, although there are suggestions that he is also an Americo-Liberian, which would make him a descendant of freed slaves from North America. He is a leader in the Episcopal Church of Liberia and a businessman specialising in the import of heavy materials. Bryant was elected chairman of the Liberian Action Party (LAP), one of the main political parties, in 1992. He is often given credit by ordinary Liberians for remaining in the country during the Taylor government when other prominent political leaders went into exile.

¹⁰¹ ICG interview with Jacques Paul Klein, Special Representative of the Secretary General, Washington, July 2003.

¹⁰² ICG interview with member of Liberia’s Transitional Legislative Assembly, Monrovia, November 2003.

⁹⁹ ICG interview with UNMIL civilian and military officials, November 2003.

Bryant was seen as “the great hope” by the international community and many Liberians attending the Accra peace talks from June to August 2003.¹⁰³ The SRSG was guardedly positive, noting that he is on the board of several U.S. companies. Compared to what preceded him, Bryant’s leadership “offers breath-taking improvements”.¹⁰⁴ He has a difficult task of addressing human rights abuses and institutional reform and is hamstrung by the factions, who regularly remind him that they appointed him. Bryant is no political heavyweight; rebel leaders and political opposition figures boast to ICG that he has little power of his own, and his room for manoeuvre is dependent on them.

A decision was taken during the Accra negotiations that the head of the transitional government would not be called “president” but “chairman”, thereby symbolising a lack of real executive powers and a role primarily as spokesperson for the signatories to the peace agreement.¹⁰⁵ One rebel politician stated that:

Bryant’s duty is to coordinate between the three warring factions. He has no administration. This is an administration for warring factions. Bryant has no powers of appointment. Yes, he is the head of state, but the day-to-day running of the country is determined by the cabinet of warring factions. They control government. People need to accept this reality. Civilians have no role in the cabinet, they are virtually voiceless.¹⁰⁶

The consequence, as a prominent religious leader put it, is that “the interim government is an arrangement with limited powers”.¹⁰⁷ The warring factions are more powerful than Bryant, who has no leverage and is very much dependent on UNMIL. As a human rights activist said, “because the warring factions have guns, what they say is final”.¹⁰⁸ Bryant has no army, and UNMIL soldiers “are not going to die for

him” despite their mandate to protect the transitional government.¹⁰⁹

The behaviour of politicians from the warring factions raises concerns about the sustainability of the peace process.¹¹⁰ The NTGL, along with the Transitional Legislative Assembly, is effectively run by members of former rebel movements. As one politician noted, “the warring factions wanted a numerical foothold in both the government and legislative assembly because they want to ensure a power block to keep a check on the chairman”.¹¹¹ A key financier of LURD and MODEL informed ICG that “the criteria for holding ministerial positions are factional associations”. The ex-rebels have ensured that they hold all the key cabinet and legislative posts and have no time or respect for other players. For them, “politicians and civil society are very poor. They provide no leadership and have no money. They are beggars”.¹¹²

A key problem for Bryant has been the battle over positions in the transitional government. Faction politicians have been consistent in accusing him of not delivering on promises he supposedly made at Accra but no one knows the nature of those promises except for a “gentleman’s agreement” over unresolved positions in the transitional government.¹¹³ It was apparently agreed that the warring factions would decide on all deputy and assistant minister appointments but Bryant has been accused of blocking these. The Accra document was signed on 18 August, yet nearly two months passed with no apparent decision on filling either deputy or assistant minister positions. The faction politicians accused Bryant of seeking clarification from the mediation team of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) in Abuja. His detractors argue that this was as a mistake, that he is an “off-shoot and not a signatory to Accra” and should have consulted with the factions,¹¹⁴ who also accuse him of unilaterally appointing people without power to do so. They are prepared to sacrifice the

¹⁰³ ICG with UNMIL military official, Monrovia, November 2003.

¹⁰⁴ ICG interview with senior Western diplomat, Monrovia, November 2003.

¹⁰⁵ ICG interview with prominent Liberian politician, Monrovia, November 2003.

¹⁰⁶ ICG interview with LURD and MODEL financier, Monrovia, November 2003.

¹⁰⁷ ICG interview, Monrovia, October 2003.

¹⁰⁸ ICG interview, Monrovia, November 2003.

¹⁰⁹ ICG interview with Liberian Lawyer, Monrovia, November 2003.

¹¹⁰ The behaviour of rebel leaders is discussed further below.

¹¹¹ ICG interview with Liberian politician, Monrovia, November 2003.

¹¹² ICG interview with LURD and MODEL financier, Monrovia, November 2003.

¹¹³ ICG interview with human rights activist and Liberian politician, Monrovia, November 2003.

¹¹⁴ ICG interview with Liberian Lawyer, Monrovia, November 2003.

peace process for the sake of gaining the power and prestige that goes with top positions. One politician even suggested LURD would “leave the scene” if job allocations were not resolved.¹¹⁵ For Bryant, “when there was no specific provision in [the Accra Agreement]..., then constitutional provisions will prevail”.¹¹⁶ Liberia’s 1986 constitution stipulates that assistant minister positions should be allocated by the President.

In late December 2003, the three warring factions submitted a seven-page document to Bryant entitled “The Monrovia clarification on the 18 August 2003 Comprehensive Peace Agreement”, on the unresolved issue of assistant minister nominations. This prompted nine political parties and civil society groups to threaten their withdrawal from the transitional administration. On 7 January, Bryant was forced to give in to rebel demands by awarding 51 of 86 assistant ministers’ positions “for the sake of peace”. However, the warring factions will use their victory to try for further concessions and will threaten to leave the process if they are dissatisfied. An UNMIL official stated, “it is unfortunate that Bryant had to concede to rebel demands since it will now signal the beginning of a slippery slide towards potential chaos”.¹¹⁷ ECOWAS mediators and several other participants at Accra had already suggested that the transitional government should be streamlined because Liberia could not afford so many place-holders. Moreover, it is only a transitional government tasked with trying to bring back basic services.

The jury is still out on Bryant’s ability to manage a transitional period. He is increasingly paralysed. As a senior Western diplomat noted, he will continue to be in an “awkward position because of the composite nature of the characters” in the NTGL.¹¹⁸ But Bryant also needs to shake off accusations that he is not politically neutral. There are increased perceptions that his advisers are using his position to help themselves at the October 2005 elections. Beyond his immediate government helpers, Bryant is closely advised by others who are either drawn from or closely associated to his political party, the Liberian Action Party (LAP). Many fighters and

politicians accuse Bryant and these individuals of “creating a fourth warring faction”.¹¹⁹

Loss of faith in the ability of Bryant and the faction leaders to manage the transition would pose a problem for implementing the peace. The increasing display of personal interests has already paralysed the NTGL, leaving many to wonder how it can seriously begin to map out what needs to be done to reconstruct the state and ensure that basic services are provided to its long-suffering population.

¹¹⁵ ICG interview with LURD politician, Monrovia, November 2003.

¹¹⁶ ICG interview with Liberian Lawyer, Monrovia, November 2003.

¹¹⁷ ICG interview, January 2004.

¹¹⁸ ICG interview, Monrovia, November 2003.

¹¹⁹ ICG interviews with representatives from LURD, MODEL, civil society and political parties, Monrovia, November 2003.

V. BUILDING A FUNCTIONING STATE: PRIORITIES FOR THE UN AND DONORS

No one has anything positive to say about the possibilities of rebuilding the Liberian state. The adjectives are damning: “ravaged”, “messed up”, and “lost” are but a few of the descriptions Liberians and international actors use to describe the country. Signs of hope are easily dismissed, and there is great scepticism even among those who appear optimistic that peace can be obtained.¹²⁰ The prospect for rebuilding a functioning state were starkly pointed out by an UNMIL official: “The state has effectively collapsed. We have to start from ground zero”.¹²¹ Civil servants have received no salary for two years, and most ministries are empty after Taylor’s forces looted government buildings during the battle for Monrovia in June-July 2003. The same UNMIL official added that “there is no government to speak about. Many government ministries do not have chairs, desks or carpets. Ministries have lost all records and there is no one to talk to about the running of the country. Out of the 22 ministries, only foreign affairs and defence are not badly affected”. Similarly, the legislative assembly was looted, although the speaker’s office, occupied by LURD politician George Dweh, is remarkably regal, with gold plated trimmings on every chair. The security sector turned into a terror machine under a series of brutal leaders, and there is no public administration capable of delivering basic services. Monrovia is destitute but will benefit economically over the next few years from a large expatriate community. Beyond the capital, the country is in ruins.

That the UN, donors and international financial institutions have to start from scratch might prove positive but “everything needs to be rebuilt and there is no guarantee that the international community can finish whatever it starts”.¹²² Donors are waiting to see how well the UN does and not trusting the commitment of fighters. The rush to disarm, in order to show donors that UNMIL was making progress, has not impressed many. As a representative of a

leading donor told ICG, “impressing donors was misguided. We are now concerned about coordination and want to see better management” within UNMIL.¹²³ Much of what UNMIL can deliver will, however, depend on the generosity and goodwill of donors. A first priority is to get enough troops into the country to prevent further delays in UNMIL’s disarmament program. It is encouraging that the troop contributing countries have moved faster on this since mid-January 2004.

The 5-6 February 2004 donors conference provides an opportunity to help Liberia out of years of turbulence. The fact that it will be co-chaired by U.S. Secretary of State Colin Powell and UN Secretary General Kofi Annan shows there is serious attention.¹²⁴ Two factors are critical – delivering aid and addressing tough issues aimed at creating a more efficient state that improves the lives of ordinary Liberians. Real money and hard thinking are required to reform key ministries and governance structures if Liberia is not to remain in crisis. The country cannot afford to rely on promises. Conference attendees need to understand that this is Liberia’s last chance for peace.

A. DELIVERING AID

Chairman Bryant and his advisors have drafted a reconstruction plan to present at the donors conference. The transitional government seeks between U.S.\$200 and U.S.\$300 million directly in foreign aid, although some advisors, and the final UN/World Bank/NTGL/donor assessment of need detailed in the “Results-Focused Transition Framework” (RFTF) presented at the preparatory donors session put the requirement for a solid start on reconstruction and reform through 2005 at U.S.\$500 million.¹²⁵ The NTGL has identified a number of priority areas for investment over the next two years, which have been incorporated into the joint RFTF presented to donors:

- reintegration of fighters;

¹²³ ICG interview, January 2003.

¹²⁴ The conference will be hosted in New York by the UN, the World Bank and the U.S.

¹²⁵ ICG interview with adviser to the National Transitional Government of Liberia, Monrovia, November 2003. For a summary of the RFTF, see Appendix C, “Priority Outcomes and Expected Result for the Transition Period: 2004-05 and Reconstruction Conference February 2004 Needs Assessment”.

¹²⁰ On several occasions when ICG staff asked people if they were optimistic, answers were prefaced with “vaguely”, or “cautiously”: ICG interviews, Monrovia, November 2003.

¹²¹ ICG interview with UNMIL political official, Monrovia, November 2003.

¹²² ICG interview with international NGO representative, Monrovia, November 2003.

- ❑ rebuilding physical infrastructure (roads, hospitals, schools, and ports);
- ❑ restoring basic social services (safe drinking water, electricity and telephone services, health and sanitation);
- ❑ rule of law and human rights;
- ❑ security sector reform,
- ❑ electoral reform and assistance in the management of the election process; and
- ❑ job creation.¹²⁶

The actual breakdown in the RFTF incorporates:

1. Security, including UNMIL deployment and armed forces restructuring
2. Disarmament, demobilisation, reintegration and rehabilitation (DR) for ex-combatants
3. DR programs for refugee returnees and IDPs
4. Governance and rule of law, including public sector capacity-building, local government, judiciary, police, corrections, civil society and human rights
5. Elections
6. Basic services, including health and nutrition, education and water and sanitation
7. Restoration of productive capacity and livelihoods, including agriculture, fishery, community development and social safety nets
8. Infrastructure including power, transport, communications and urban water
9. Economic policy and development strategy

Funding is the first problem. Managing the funds effectively will be the second. Both will test the UN and the international community as well as the NTGL and Liberian society. Donors do not trust the UN bureaucracy and so are reluctant to place their money into the UNMIL trust fund. The U.S. and the EU already have indicated they plan to provide substantial levels of grant assistance. France may be a significant contributor as well since its foreign minister is scheduled to attend the donors conference. It is hoped that in addition to meeting the needs for external aid, the reconstruction conference at the UN

will produce an action plan for moving forward, with an understanding of which donors will lead in which sectors in concert with the NGTL.

In addition, Liberia has a huge debt – an estimated U.S.\$2.7 billion compared to GDP of less than U.S.\$1 billion – of which U.S.\$681 million is owed to the International Monetary Fund. The NTGL reasons that the very enormity of these problems means donors will deliver. Positively, the U.S. has lifted its ban on voting for International Financial Institution (IFI) loans to Liberia.¹²⁷ Liberians expect the U.S., with \$200 million in grant aid earmarked, to play a large role in the reconstruction process, at least in part, according to some, to compensate for not contributing troops for UNMIL.¹²⁸ Another key donor, the UK, is likely to put most of its money into humanitarian assistance. The EU invoked Article 96 of the Cotonou Agreement during Charles Taylor's time in office in order to set human rights benchmarks that Liberia would have to meet in order to receive aid.¹²⁹ It intends to condition its assistance relationship with the transitional government on respect for the same benchmarks and to concentrate efforts on governance reform and humanitarian issues, for which it is expected to pledge up to €100 million. China, following renewal of diplomatic ties in October 2003, is expected to focus on rehabilitation of infrastructure. Nevertheless, many

¹²⁷ Under the Brooke Amendment, the U.S. government was not allowed to provide bilateral assistance, only humanitarian aid. The amendment dates to the late 1980s and applies to countries more than one year in default on loan payments to the U.S. Liberia has been in violation since 1 July 1989. President Bush waived the prohibition in December 2003 by determining that assistance is in the U.S. national interest, a waiver that has been used at various times to enable aid for Liberia. Fiscal Year 2000 funds, for example, were used for assistance to Liberia. Examples of activities funded that year were vocational skills training, child health, agricultural planning and rehabilitation, and a program to improve the economic status of vulnerable youth. A similar prohibition in the foreign assistance act had barred U.S. votes in favour of loans in international financial institutions. The president also waived that provision in December 2003.

¹²⁸ ICG interview with international NGO representative, Monrovia, November 2003.

¹²⁹ The Cotonou Agreement, which regulates EU assistance to and trade relationships with 77 African, Caribbean and Pacific countries, was signed on 23 June 2000. In December 2001, the EU invoked Article 96 of the treaty to initiate consultations with Liberia on human rights and governance issues and proceeded to establish the above-referenced conditions for its aid.

¹²⁶ ICG interview with Gyude Bryant, Chairman of the National Transitional Government of Liberia, Monrovia, November 2003.

donors are cautious, worrying about “the life expectancy of the transitional government”.¹³⁰

Donors will also need a strategy that adequately supports all sections of the state. It is encouraging that the UN, led by the UNDP, the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank, the U.S. and the EU, have worked with the NTGL since late November 2003 on the RFTF ahead of the donors’ conference. There is now growing pressure on all of them to coordinate strategies.

B. ADDRESSING HARD ISSUES

UNMIL and the donors are trying to rebuild a country with few foundations, extensive corruption and no tradition of rule of law and justice. A number of hard issues such as reform of the security sector and institutions, particularly the justice and finance ministries, need to be discussed by those planning development strategies. There is little sign of honesty among politicians, and too much power is centred in Monrovia.¹³¹ Attention should, therefore, be given to creating a new, accountable security sector, devolving power to the interior and helping develop new political leaders who can prepare the ground for a better Liberia.

So far, many donors have shown real interest only in humanitarian assistance, though even here there are growing concerns about ensuring sufficient funding.¹³² A frustrated senior diplomat told ICG, “everybody wants to do humanitarian assistance”, which produces faster results and requires less intimate involvement from donors who are often reluctant to address tricky issues that produce slow results. The diplomat added, Liberia “needs help in tough areas. Who is prepared to do budgetary reform in the ministry of finance or work seriously on rule

of law issues? Liberia needs donors that will focus on police and justice reform because without restructuring the rule of law, we cannot get the ministry of justice to mete out justice on those who violate human rights”.¹³³

No sector can be left unaddressed but the immediate emphasis must be on providing sufficient money to ensure the proper reintegration of fighters and continue support for security on the ground. It is also vital that planning be done to restore Liberia’s shattered communities.

1. Restructuring the Armed Forces

Liberia has never had a truly national army or police. Both institutions served the immediate needs of the government in power. Ordinary citizens have no faith in their capacity to perform their duties after years of indiscriminate human rights abuses. Most agree that reform of the ramshackle security sector must take place before elections. This includes the complete demobilisation of all fighting factions as a precursor to re-establishing a national army, while preventing the creation of local militias. This will take time, and much of the country’s internal security will depend largely on UNMIL peacekeepers for the foreseeable future.

In fact, the national army, the Armed Forces of Liberia (AFL) has served for decades not to defend the territory or protect citizens, but to aid the government. President Samuel Doe (1980-1990) ethnicised and politicised the AFL and used it to crush opponents. Under the 1997 Abuja Peace Accord, Charles Taylor was required to restructure the army with the support of the Economic Community of West African States’ Monitoring Group (ECOMOG). Instead, he sidelined the original AFL fighters and replaced them with his National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL) rebels, mainly from

¹³⁰ ICG interview with senior Western diplomat, January 2004.

¹³¹ ICG interview with World Bank official, Freetown, January 2004.

¹³² A World Bank official noted, “very little has been mobilised [for humanitarian assistance] and, therefore, we need to factor this into the donor reconstruction conference”. ICG interview, Freetown, January 2004. The UN Consolidated Appeals Process (CAP) fund launched in November 2003 requested a total of U.S.\$137 million for humanitarian aid to Liberia. See “Liberia 2004: Consolidated Appeals Process (CAP), New York and Geneva, November 2003. As of mid-January 2004, only U.S.\$20 million had been earmarked.

¹³³ ICG interview, Monrovia, November 2003. It is encouraging that documents prepared for the donors conference, notably the RFTF discussed above, do appear to recognise the importance of attacking Liberia’s problems on a broad front. U.S. officials also told ICG in January 2004 that they and other key donors, bilateral and multilateral, are aware of and sensitive about the requirement to get into the “tough areas”. Nevertheless, restructuring a justice sector to make it both functioning and transparent and developing an effective and corruption-free public administration and a working banking sector are never easy in post-conflict conditions, and particularly not in the midst of the kind of devastation experienced in Liberia.

Nimba County. Like Doe, Taylor used the army as a hit squad to attack those he considered his enemies.

Partly because the army has been abused by successive leaders, several Liberians and others interviewed by ICG advocate disbanding it and demilitarising the country. SRSK Klein is one of those who has questioned the need for the army, claiming that soldiers “only play cards and plot coups”.¹³⁴ The army is seen as costly to maintain, while there are more important priorities in post-war Liberia where “most of the security threats are internal and not external. In addition, Liberia has been the main threat in the region, aggressively launching, financing and sustaining wars in neighbouring countries”.¹³⁵ Removing the army could limit the culture of violence. According to advocates, an efficient police should be the main goal, perhaps also with border security agents to guard the frontiers.

It is hard to imagine any African leader adopting the radical concept of doing without an army. A Western humanitarian official asked rhetorically, “can you imagine Bryant or any other leader going to see his African counterpart to discuss security without an army? It would never happen”!¹³⁶ The 1986 constitution envisages an army to defend territorial integrity. It could be amended, but as a LURD military official noted, “we would fight” any such decision.¹³⁷ Many of the militiamen have been fighting for most of their lives and expect to be integrated within a new national army. Fighters who came from the AFL and know no other life will want to return. A senior Western diplomat argued, “The number one industry of Liberia is war, and it employs the most people. After fourteen years of nothing but that, many who see themselves as generals and soldiers want us to train them in a new army. It would be a really good idea not to

have an army, but it may be a bridge too far and, therefore, a hard sell”.¹³⁸

Liberia will likely have a national army, but what kind is very much a key issue. On 17 December 1998 a Restructuring Commission presented a report to then President Taylor. It stated that “to restructure the Armed Forces of Liberia, the President and Commander-In-Chief should follow a downsize-upsize strategy. In other words, as some soldiers are demobilised and others are retired or discharged, recruitment should take place at the same time to bring in new soldiers”.¹³⁹ This plan has never been implemented.

Most who discuss army reform agree on three points: the U.S. must be involved, primarily because the army is modelled on the U.S. military, and many older fighters have been trained by U.S. officers; a new army must reflect geographical and ethnic balance; and it should be smaller. The ALF normally has 6,000 to 7,000 soldiers; the hope is to make it as small as 4,000 to 5,000.¹⁴⁰ New recruits will need to be vetted carefully to keep out the many who have committed serious human rights abuses, and training on democratic control of the military should underpin reform efforts. Beyond these points, various options will be reviewed by the Military Advisory Committee set up to consider reform. The committee is made up of the chiefs of staff from the GOL, LURD and MODEL, with logistical support and advice from UNMIL. It is anticipated that some thirteen U.S. military advisors will be part of this process by late next month and that the U.S. will respond positively to the NTGL’s request to take the role of lead donor on security sector reform.¹⁴¹

The difficulty of transforming this traditionally corrupt and repressive machinery should not be underestimated. A new national army will need to be closely tied to political and economic development. Donors will be reluctant to fund a grossly oversized force but providing some form of alternative employment will be key to preventing disgruntled

¹³⁴ Kolec E. Jessey, “The Army is Costly; disband it”, *The Perspective*, 27 November 2003, available at www.theperspective.org.

¹³⁵ ICG interview with private Liberian citizen, Monrovia, November 2003.

¹³⁶ ICG interview, Monrovia, November 2003. Under Article 34(c) of the 1986 Constitution, the legislative assembly has the power to raise and support and to make rules about the governance of the army. Under Chapter Nine (Emergency Powers), the president, as commander-in-chief of the armed forces, can in situations of a state of emergency and war, call upon the army to defend the country (Article 85).

¹³⁷ ICG interview with LURD minister, National Transitional Government of Liberia, Monrovia, November 2003.

¹³⁸ ICG interview with Western diplomat, November 2003.

¹³⁹ “AFL, Restructuring Commission Report submitted by the Armed Forces of Liberia (AFL) Restructuring Commission to President Charles Taylor and Commander-In-Chief of the Armed Forces of Liberia”, 17 December 1998.

¹⁴⁰ ICG interview with LURD minister, National Transitional Government of Liberia, Monrovia, November 2003.

¹⁴¹ ICG interviews with U.S. officials, Washington, January 2004.

fighters who are left out from causing more lawlessness.

2. Creating a New Police Force

The Liberian National Police (LNP) is also heavily politicised. Under Charles Taylor, they were militarised and used weapons indiscriminately against civilians. As a senior police officer stated, “the police were never used in the defence of the public but as personal instruments to secure Charles Taylor’s political agenda”.¹⁴² A paramilitary police unit, the Special Operations Division (SOD), had a particularly bad reputation.¹⁴³ Most of the estimated 4,000 LNP came from Taylor’s NPFL and militias.

According to its mandate, UNMIL is to “assist in monitoring and restructuring the police force, and to assist in the training of civilian police”,¹⁴⁴ but it has started to build a new force from scratch. The civilian police (CIVPOL) commissioner, Mark Kroeker, from Cleveland (U.S.) and a veteran of police reform in the Balkans, arrived in mid-November 2003 to begin the job. By mid-January, there were 72 CIVPOL officers and 240 armed police officers in two units in the police academy and LNP headquarters in Monrovia, with another 76 U.S. civilian police anticipated to be in country by the end of February.

The LNP has been disbanded and the SOD replaced by a Special Task Force.¹⁴⁵ The SRSG believes that only a fourth of the police can be retrained after vetting for past abuses.¹⁴⁶ The treasury has no money so UNMIL will pay each officer about U.S.\$30 a month for two years.¹⁴⁷ While the new force is being created, interim police are being trained, but only for Monrovia.¹⁴⁸

Police had not been paid for at least two years, and there is virtually no basic infrastructure. The headquarters is nearly empty of chairs and desks, and Police estimate they need U.S.\$3 million for communication equipment alone.¹⁴⁹ Taylor’s officers took police vehicles with them in the months of fighting. The counties lack any real police presence, and establishing one will be difficult while fighters are still armed. However, one is desperately needed if Liberians are to believe that the rule of law will be respected.

Donors are often reluctant to finance the police but internal security in Liberia depends on a transparent and accountable force. Without proper attention to police training in democratic control and human rights, it will be difficult to restore law and order and improve the lives of ordinary citizens.

3. Political Issues

Security sector reform needs to be done in the context of far-reaching political and possibly constitutional reform, including rethinking of relations between the central government and the counties and electoral reform. Liberia’s political elite and civil society have deliberated in the past about reform of the political system but there has been no systematic documentation, even of the three-day conference in August 1998, “Vision 2024”,¹⁵⁰ the recommendations of which Charles Taylor blocked. A former member of civil society said its conclusions “would have been an indictment on Taylor’s government” only one year after he took office.¹⁵¹ Leadership and reconciliation conferences held during 2002 – in Abuja, (Nigeria), 14-15 March; Bethesda, Maryland, (U.S.), 28-29 June; Ouagadougou (Burkina Faso), 8-11 July – were, however, documented. The recommendations of the Monrovia reconciliation meeting, 26 July through

¹⁴² ICG interview with senior Liberian police officer, Monrovia, November 2003.

¹⁴³ Ibid.

¹⁴⁴ UN Security Council Resolution 1509, 19 September 2003.

¹⁴⁵ ICG interview with senior Liberian police officer, Monrovia, November 2003.

¹⁴⁶ ICG interview with Jacques Paul Klein, UN Special Representative of the Secretary General, Monrovia, October 2003.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid.

¹⁴⁸ At least 400 interim police officers began training in mid-January 2004. There will be up to twelve days training for officers who have been vetted for the interim period. The training course will focus on rule of law, crime reporting, crowd control and human rights.

¹⁴⁹ ICG interview with senior Liberian police officer, Monrovia, November 2003.

¹⁵⁰ “Vision 2024” was, as a Liberian civil society representative put it, “a public relations attempt by Charles Taylor to preside over Liberia for 27 years”. He wanted to rule Liberia like President William Tubman had done. “It was not a forum to think about how to rebuild Liberia (after the war years); it was Taylor’s attempt to tell Liberians of his intention to be president for life”. ICG interview, Monrovia, November 2003.

¹⁵¹ ICG interview with former member of civil society now in the National Transitional Legislature, Monrovia, November 2003.

late August 2002, were also blocked by Taylor, although participants put together a draft summary.¹⁵²

Most people interviewed by ICG have been clear about the problems. In general, they agree these did not start with Taylor but were compounded by his predatory style. A product of a corrupt and violent political culture, he found a system he could abuse. If there is “anything that Charles Taylor’s rule and the last fourteen years [have] done, it is that [they have] debased political life and ruined the leadership of the country”.¹⁵³ Every political leader has been tainted and none know how to govern the country. Liberia’s “politics is not about policies or governance. It is about power and personalities”.¹⁵⁴ Getting its politicians to think about issues other than who will become president is nearly impossible. They are so divided that even finding a leader to challenge Taylor or the rebels during the Accra negotiations was impossible. A senior diplomat complained, “if you have 36 Liberians in a room, you will have 36 presidential candidates, or even 37”!¹⁵⁵

It is almost misleading to talk about political parties. Liberia’s eighteen have no serious agenda and do not represent any clear constituency. As a result, political leaders have tended to manipulate ethnic differences. A deep distrust and separation is now ingrained in the ethnic groups, most seriously between the Americo-Liberians and the indigenous populations. These divisions have resulted in exclusion, accusations of lack of freedom and human rights violations.¹⁵⁶ They amount to a “chronic disease”.¹⁵⁷ The Americo-Liberians, descendants of freed slaves from the U.S., “believe that indigenous Liberians sold their ancestors”. Many indigenous people still see the Americo-Liberians as enemies. Every leader has “kept differences alive”.¹⁵⁸

The SRSR recognises that there can be no question of trying to restore the Liberia of the 1970s. He acknowledges that a number of significant issues need debate, including the constitution, with a view to weakening the all-powerful presidency and preparing for elections. This will also involve determining eligibility to vote in the absence of a decent census for over 30 years.¹⁵⁹

Klein has signalled he wants to rebuild political parties around programs rather than personalities, a constitutional convention, and then a process for getting to elections in 2005.¹⁶⁰ Finding the right calibre of individuals to begin the task of transforming and changing the political system is difficult. Many Liberians who could make a difference are reluctant to enter the political fray. A civil society actor sounded despondent:

We Liberians have not reached a level of social consciousness that can provide for change within. It requires a lot of hard work, and there is no serious politician or human rights and pro-democracy organisation that can achieve such change. We need to prove to the international community that there can be credible organisations to trigger action but this is virtually impossible.¹⁶¹

Compounding the difficulty is the weak performance of civil society. When ICG raised the role of civil society in the peace process, the common response was “what is civil about civil society”?¹⁶² A key problem is that a number of politicians and civil society actors have dual roles. As another member of civil society said, “During the day many people pose as civil society actors, but at night they are politicians”.¹⁶³ The term has often been misused

¹⁵² During Taylor’s time in office, a number of other documents on reforming the Liberian state were produced, including “Governance Program for Liberia, August 2000”, and “AFL: Restructuring Commission Report”, op. cit. Many were cited in the 18 August 2003 Accra Peace Agreement.

¹⁵³ ICG interview with representative of Liberia’s transitional legislature, Monrovia, November 2003.

¹⁵⁴ ICG interview, Freetown, December 2003.

¹⁵⁵ ICG interview, Monrovia, November 2003.

¹⁵⁶ ICG interview with senior MODEL minister, National Transitional Government of Liberia, Monrovia, November 2003.

¹⁵⁷ ICG interview with human rights activist, Monrovia, November 2003.

¹⁵⁸ ICG interview with Liberian religious leader, Monrovia, October 2003.

¹⁵⁹ ICG interviews with Jacques Paul Klein, Special Representative of the Secretary General in Liberia, Washington, July 2003 and Monrovia, October 2003.

¹⁶⁰ ICG interviews with Jacques Paul Klein, Special Representative of the Secretary General in Liberia, Washington, July 2003 and Monrovia, October 2003. He hopes to get the German political party *Stiftungen* to help apply the experience of rebuilding political parties in Germany after 1945.

¹⁶¹ ICG interview with human rights activist, Monrovia, November 2003.

¹⁶² ICG interviews with representatives of Liberia’s civil society, political figures, private citizens and international NGO representatives, Accra, July 2003 and Monrovia, October-November 2003.

¹⁶³ ICG interview with representative of Liberia’s civil society, Monrovia, October 2003.

since many claiming to represent civil society are “protecting elite interests”.¹⁶⁴ The decision by several civil society leaders to enter the government has called into question their capacity to act as an independent check on the executive and the legislature. If, as one politician states, civil society has “become directly involved in governing the country”, it can no longer be a neutral watchdog.¹⁶⁵ However, having civil society leaders at the heart of governance is not in principle a bad idea if they can maintain credibility. Some have pragmatically decided that “since we have no faith in our leaders, we have to lobby for ourselves by being within the executive and legislature”.¹⁶⁶

The association of civil society groups with parties has made funding difficult. Accusations that many were subverted by Taylor have also made donors reluctant. But there are still principled individuals who, if properly supported, could play a significant role in reconstruction. Like much else, however, civil society needs serious reform and soul-searching about its core values. Donors could assist by focusing on infrastructure and building up the resource base. Civil society can be especially useful as part of a strategy aimed at voter education but donors should disburse money only with careful monitoring of each project. Many organisations lack experience, and some are one-person shows with no clear programs, while many civil society actors who claim to be the voices of the poor do not represent any constituency.

UN administrators should be aware that Liberia has some home-grown, traditional institutions that do much of the work of modern-day civil society groups, although they might not be recognisable as such to donors, Western administrators, and the handful of Liberians in Monrovia who speak the donor language. These are societies known generally as Poro and Sande. In about three quarters of Liberia,¹⁶⁷ every boy and girl is initiated at puberty into the Poro and Sande, respectively. They are simultaneously

political-religious-aesthetic and even military. While village chiefs present the public face of politics in most of Liberia, the Poro and Sande organise a nearly invisible, parallel system of governance.

The Poro Society is led by Zoes, who are said to have supernatural powers. Zoes are not generally recognised in public but since they have considerable power and influence in villages and communities, politicians use them to gain support and legitimacy among rural people. Throughout the twentieth century, politicians have attempted to appropriate the men’s Poro society in various ways, from becoming initiated into the first level to appointing a national hierarchy of Poro heads parallel to the system of chiefs. They have manipulated the Poro and turned it into a pervasive part of the system of governance.

Charles Taylor is reported to have banned Poro activities in the region he controlled in 1989, at the start of the war, on the grounds that it would interfere with his attempt to win power. However, in 1996-1997 he joined the Poro society and assumed the senior Zoe title of Dakpannah, in a bid to garner support for the July 1997 presidential election. In effect, this gave him an election committee in villages in much of the country and a means to eliminate local enemies. Claiming to be a leading Zoe, he drew secret societies into his government. The existence of such an important but unfamiliar element of Liberian life poses further challenges to the UN. Many political and business elites in Monrovia also participate in freemasonry movements, which present a similar system of secrecy, exclusivity and power.

4. Liberia’s Interior

If Liberia is to achieve peace, reconstruction must be felt throughout the country. Donors tend to concentrate on the capital and central government, thus fuelling unbalanced development. Aid must benefit many communities that have been economically, politically and socially marginalised. Planners need to gear projects toward building local structures and encouraging returns to villages. Many towns and villages are no longer recognisable after fourteen years of fighting; roads are overgrown with bush and unusable, and houses have been burnt making it difficult to accommodate the 500,000 internally displaced persons and the estimated 312,000 refugees. Donors need to ensure that humanitarian and reconstruction work extends to the hinterland and benefits civilians as well as ex-combatants. It will be crucial to ensure that aid

¹⁶⁴ Ibid.

¹⁶⁵ ICG interview with Liberian politician, Monrovia, November 2003.

¹⁶⁶ ICG interview with representative of Liberia’s civil society, Monrovia, November 2003.

¹⁶⁷ These organisations do not exist in the Kru or Grebo ethnic communities in the southeastern part of Liberia. They do, however, exist in Guinea’s forest region in the south and most of Sierra Leone. Poro members from different lodges recognise each other (often by reference to the ritual scars applied during initiation) so that Poro members from the three countries will all regard each other as related.

focuses on providing day-to-day security, rebuilding the network of truck roads to help rural traders and installing of pump wells to provide potable water.

Opening up much of the country is a huge challenge that depends on the rapid deployment of peacekeepers and successful disarmament. Once this has happened, presumably UNMIL's many civilian administrators can begin to assist the NTGL to bring government to the interior, but the task seems overwhelming. Today, everything is centralised. Politicians have tended to see the capital "as a pseudo colonial power with the hinterland and the indigenes being colonised". The local level has no input in decision-making".¹⁶⁸ Everybody has to come to Monrovia for work and education.

Many Liberians stress the importance of a serious debate on strategies for devolving power to the counties. Most interviewed by ICG agreed that ministerial and government subdivisions should be reduced. There are numerous posts at chiefdom, district and county level, with overlapping tasks and meaningless positions whose only objective is to make money and feed the patronage system while taking a heavy toll on revenue.¹⁶⁹ Others say county superintendents, for example, should be elected in counties, not appointed by the president.

Early discussion is needed of how decentralisation fits into reconstruction and communities can be given a greater stake in donor projects. Ultimately decentralisation must be geared towards preventing further conflict.

5. Liberia's Social and Economic Condition

Liberia's economy is threadbare, having gone fourteen years without investment. Even Libya, a key ally, has not renewed some contracts.¹⁷⁰ The government has little or no money, but despite chaos and abject poverty, there are resources (rich mineral deposits, including gold and oil, a fine sea coast and forests) that, properly managed, could significantly

boost the economy. Liberia "has a lot going for itself, but it lacks a system".¹⁷¹

A key problem is how revenues have traditionally been managed. Yearly income from the shipping registry is about U.S.\$20 million, while timber produces 12 per cent of GDP. The Firestone rubber plantation, now owned by the Bridgeport Corporation, has about 1.2 million rubber trees and still functions. It is almost totally autonomous, with its own water, sewerage, electricity, and primary and secondary schools. It and many other businesses paid money directly to Taylor, who had no central revenue collection system; every government entity was its own collecting agency, and the money tended to go straight to Taylor and his inner circle.¹⁷² Similarly, Taylor and his partners monopolised profitable businesses like fuel and food and gained from imports.¹⁷³ Thus, every carton of frozen food represented a U.S.\$1 cut for Taylor and members of his National Patriotic Party, while the public paid additional costs unknowingly through heavy taxes.

The country's leaders diverted government funds to pay for extravagant lifestyles and political patronage. In many ways Liberia "was a plantation or, better still, Taylor Incorporated".¹⁷⁴ A Western diplomat said, "The way Liberia has been governed over the last fourteen years is tantamount to running a private business enterprise".¹⁷⁵ The result turned people into beggars and thieves. Taylor consciously criminalised the country by stopping salaries, and corruption flourished. Many survived only on remittances from families abroad. Taylor took what he wanted and encouraged his large entourage and security apparatus to support themselves through looting.

Donors can begin to curb this system by insisting that monies stolen by the former regime be returned.¹⁷⁶ The full figures are not known but

¹⁶⁸ ICG interview with historian at the University of Liberia, Monrovia, November 2003.

¹⁶⁹ Ibid.

¹⁷⁰ ICG interview with MODEL-LURD financier, Monrovia, November 2003.

¹⁷¹ ICG interview with senior Western diplomat, Monrovia, November 2003.

¹⁷² ICG interview with Liberian politician and MODEL-LURD financier, Monrovia, November 2003. In a welcome move that reversed years of abuse, Chairman Bryant has ordered that the no government department can issue tax penalties on its own, and that all tax receipts are to be directed to the Treasury.

¹⁷³ ICG Report, *Liberia: Security Challenges*, op. cit., p. 20.

¹⁷⁴ ICG interview with MODEL-LURD financier, Monrovia, November 2003.

¹⁷⁵ ICG interview, Freetown, December 2003.

¹⁷⁶ Nigeria established a useful precedent by requesting Swiss banks to return monies stolen by its former military dictator,

Taylor and his financial associates have at least U.S.\$100 million in Swiss and other foreign banks. Swiss authorities froze accounts belonging to two Taylor associates on request of the Special Court for Sierra Leone after it indicted Taylor.¹⁷⁷

Liberians have suggested areas for international economic experts to concentrate on, including:

- creating an environment that encourages investment;
- restoring the legal framework for contractual arrangements;
- reforming the tax system with a priority on ensuring that monies collected go to the national treasury;
- introducing generally acceptable budgetary and accounting systems;
- strengthening legislative oversight of executive branch spending as required by the constitution; and
- ending monopolies on basic commodities like petroleum products, frozen food and rice.¹⁷⁸

Some sources of revenue could be activated almost immediately. The Nimba mountains on the northern border with Guinea are one of the world's largest reserves of high-quality iron ore. Plans to mine on the untouched Guinean side are under negotiation but hundreds of thousands of tons mined in Liberia have been in port at Buchanan since the early 1990s, largely because of legal wrangles over ownership. UNMIL and its robust mandate may enable a sale that would bring in some funds and open up the possibilities of further investment.

Sani Abacha. It estimated that the Abacha family stole up to U.S.\$2 billion from the country and has been fighting since the dictator's death in June 1998 to retrieve this mainly from Swiss accounts. On 19 December 2003, a Swiss bank said that it would release to the Nigerian government U.S.\$90 million of the U.S.\$600 million reported to be in Switzerland. BBC Radio, Focus on Africa, 19 December 2003.

¹⁷⁷ Taylor is also said to have stolen up to U.S.\$1 million from Liberia's Central Bank before going into exile. ICG interviews with UNMIL officials and civil society representatives, Monrovia, October-November 2003.

¹⁷⁸ This list is taken from the Liberian national reconciliation conference held in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso, 8-11 July 2002. In a welcome move, Chairman Gyude Bryant lifted the import monopolies on fuel and rice, which were a significant source of income for President Taylor and his financiers.

Liberian entrepreneurship and investment need to be promoted with early emphasis on addressing the Lebanese stranglehold on the business community. Currently 90 to 95 per cent of the economy is controlled by Lebanese, who, however, have no incentive to reinvest profits from their businesses in Liberia because they enjoy little or no legal status or national identity there. Article 27(b) of the constitution states that "in order to preserve, foster and maintain the positive culture, value and character, only persons who are Negroes or of Negro descent shall qualify by birth or by naturalization to be citizens of Liberia". Removing this racist provision would be a critical first step in the process of encouraging many Lebanese families who have resided in Liberia for decades to invest more in the country.¹⁷⁹ As rule of law is built up in the society, attention should be given to providing the kind of legal security that will encourage both domestic and foreign investors to put their money into job and wealth producing enterprises.

The future of the sanctions regime and its impact on Liberia's economy will need to be addressed. The Security Council wisely decided on 22 December 2003 that it will essentially remain intact until the security situation improved, export transparency on timber and diamonds is established and the government shows it can manage the forests.¹⁸⁰ It is welcome news that the U.S. has signalled its intention to help with proper management of the forestry sector.¹⁸¹ ICG has consistently argued that the arms embargo should be retained until peace is properly restored.¹⁸²

Most development strategists and international financial institutions are gloomy about Liberia's economic prospects. There are serious concerns about how the country can tackle poverty and deal with 85 per cent unemployment.¹⁸³ The average Liberian fortunate to make U.S.\$5 per day "just

¹⁷⁹ ICG interviews with private Liberian citizens, Liberian lawyers and UNMIL officials, October-November 2003.

¹⁸⁰ UN Security Council Resolution 1521, 22 December 2003.

¹⁸¹ ICG telephone interview with western diplomat, January 2004, later confirmed with U.S. officials, Washington, DC, January 2004.

¹⁸² ICG Report, *Liberia: Security Challenges*, op. cit.

¹⁸³ Over 80 per cent of Liberia's population lives below the poverty line. See "Liberia 2004: Consolidated Appeals Process (CAP), New and Geneva, November 2003, p. 1.

wants to eat and make double the money".¹⁸⁴ Compounding post-war recovery problems are the many internally displaced and refugees.

Considerable attention will also have to be given to improving education. Most schools have been closed five times or more in the last three years of intensified conflict. Young people are less educated than adults, thereby making it harder to renew the political class,¹⁸⁵ or even to make them productive members of the workforce. As a MODEL minister said, "Most children can identify a gun but not a computer".¹⁸⁶ Many young men, including children as young as ten, are heavily involved in alcohol and drugs.

Universal compulsory education is badly needed but donors should especially target the population in the 14 counties, who have generally been excluded from good schools, the best of which are all in Monrovia.¹⁸⁷ Rebuilding schools burnt in the war, replacing chairs and arming children with school bags filled with books, papers and pencil, as initiated under the UNICEF "back to school program", are all useful quick-impact projects but donors need to go beyond this.¹⁸⁸ Teachers, like other civil servants, have not been paid for two years. Extensive revision of curricula will be required to promote civil awareness and tolerance. There has been a tremendous "beating down of Liberian values", and the mentalities of many have been corrupted,¹⁸⁹ making education, especially civic education, a necessary part of the reconstruction agenda.

6. Human Rights and Justice

Addressing human rights abuse is more difficult because many in the transitional government and legislature are themselves violators. A NTGL member said, "take for example George Dweh. There is something fundamental[ly] wrong" when characters with a murderous past become assembly

speaker.¹⁹⁰ Some charged with reforming the judiciary have a history of intimidation and "criminalisation of the judicial process".¹⁹¹

The reality is that there are no institutions currently capable of seriously addressing human rights abuses. The Independent National Commission on Human Rights established under Article XII of the Accra agreement is expected to focus on monitoring compliance with the peace and promoting human rights education "throughout the various sectors of Liberian society, including schools, the media, the police and the military". But it will need significant financial and technical assistance. UNMIL is mandated to monitor and investigate human rights abuses. The relevant unit is still being set up, although information is being collected. Civil protection and investigations are also handled by UNHCR and UNDP. Experts need to determine how to bring to justice anyone responsible for human rights violations. With poor security in much of the country, preventing further abuses is difficult. There are still many in the bush who fear further harassment by the warring factions. The Security Council, relying on data collected by UNMIL and others, should take a firmer line against violations committed since the signing of the peace agreement. Without clear censure and the prospect of prosecution, whether ultimately before a domestic court or the International Criminal Court, the factions will operate as before.

Ensuring proper respect for human rights, however, depends largely on reform of judicial and penal institutions. A justice system with due process and fair trials was absent long before Charles Taylor came to power. The inauguration of a new supreme court in January 2004 is a welcome sign that the NTGL is taking seriously the need to work fast on judicial and legal reform.

¹⁸⁴ ICG interview with international NGO representative, Monrovia, November 2003.

¹⁸⁵ ICG interview with senior Western diplomat, Monrovia, November 2003.

¹⁸⁶ ICG interview with senior MODEL minister, National Transitional Government of Liberia, Monrovia, November 2003.

¹⁸⁷ ICG with international NGO representative, Monrovia, November 2003.

¹⁸⁸ Ibid.

¹⁸⁹ ICG interview with senior Western diplomat, Monrovia, November 2003.

¹⁹⁰ ICG interview, Monrovia, November 2003. George Dweh is accused by many Liberians of murdering a man called Johnny Nah early in Liberia's first civil war in 1990. He was also linked to a number of atrocities committed by death squads set up under the former Liberian president, Samuel Doe, at the start of that conflict.

¹⁹¹ ICG interview with Liberian civil society representative, Monrovia, November 2003.

VI. CONCLUSION

Many Liberians will openly acknowledge that they are, in effect, living under a UN protectorate and prefer it to remain that way for the foreseeable future.¹⁹² They have suffered too long under poor leaders and warlords and are desperate for peace. They lack self-confidence and have put their hope for a better future in UN hands. They like UNMIL and want it to succeed but more than three months after inauguration of the transitional government, concern is creeping back in. UNMIL cannot afford to make more mistakes.

What matters first is to secure the country, prevent fighters from continually crossing borders, and restore law and order by ensuring effective, country-wide deployment of UNMIL troops and creating a good disarmament program. Too much rides on the UN running a well-organised operation in Liberia to allow the mission to fail. However, UNMIL will need to manage itself better,¹⁹³ and rebuilding the security sector will need to be at the core of donor assistance.

It is also essential that job creation and basic services like electricity, clean water and passable roads come quickly and not just to Monrovia. For Liberians to believe that their years of suffering are ending, donor aid will need to provide early evidence that institutional reform is being seriously addressed. The February 2004 donors conference should be seen as a moment to galvanise much needed support to help Liberians put in place a civil administration that can handle reconstruction. Donors should recognise that it will be impossible to stabilise the rest of West Africa without properly securing and governing Liberia.

But solutions to short and medium-term problems such as security will leave Liberia still with the vast challenge of reforming its governance if it is not to slide back into anarchy. SRSK Klein intends to give UNMIL a hands-on approach to restoring peace but the UN cannot realistically complete the necessary foundation let alone rebuild Liberia within its two-year mandate. Even free and fair

elections, if they can be held on schedule in 2005, will not guarantee against a return to war. It is increasingly evident that Liberia requires a longer-term strategy, a subject that ICG will address in a subsequent report.

Freetown/Brussels, 30 January 2004

¹⁹² One prominent Liberian political figure went as far as to state that Liberia would be better off as a UN trusteeship rather than run by its politicians. ICG interview with Liberian politician, Dakar, July 2003.

¹⁹³ ICG interview with UNMIL official, November 2003.

APPENDIX A
MAP OF LIBERIA



APPENDIX B

GLOSSARY OF ACRONYMS

- AFL:** Armed Forces of Liberia, the official national army of Liberia under former President Samuel Doe. Charles Taylor created a parallel AFL, staffed with his own loyalists, when he came to power in 1997.
- DR:** Disarmament, Reintegration program. For greater simplicity, ICG uses this abbreviation to refer also to the closely related concepts of demobilisation, resettlement and repatriation, the totality of which elsewhere may be abbreviated as DDRRR or DDR.
- ECOMOG:** Economic Community of West African States' Monitoring Group.
- ECOWAS:** Economic Community of West African States
- GOL:** Government of Liberia, but in this report referring specifically to one of the three warring factions, namely the troops loyal, or previously loyal, to former President Charles Taylor.
- LAP:** Liberian Action Party, the party of Guyde Bryant, the chairman of the National Transitional Government.
- LNP:** Liberian National Police
- LURD:** Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy, a rebel group opposed to President Charles Taylor's government and created in early 1999 in Freetown, Sierra Leone, now one of the three warring factions.
- MINUCI:** Mission des Nations Unies en Côte d'Ivoire (United Nations Mission in Côte d'Ivoire).
- MODEL:** Movement for Democracy in Liberia, a rebel group opposed to President Charles Taylor's government whose formation was announced in March 2003 in Côte d'Ivoire, now one of the three warring factions.
- NEC:** National Executive Committee of the LURD.
- NPFL:** National Patriotic Front of Liberia, Charles Taylor's rebel group in the first Liberian civil war.
- NTGL:** National Transitional Government of Liberia.
- RSLAF:** Republic of Sierra Leone Armed Forces (name readopted in 2002).
- SOD:** Special Operations Division, part of Charles Taylor's security apparatus, now disbanded.
- UNAMSIL:** United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone.
- UNMIL:** United Nations Mission in Liberia.
- WFP:** World Food Programme.
- UNDP:** United Nations Development Program.
- UNHCR:** United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees.
- UNICEF:** United Nations Children's Fund.

APPENDIX C

LIBERIA RECONSTRUCTION CONFERENCE PRIORITY OUTCOMES AND EXPECTED RESULTS FOR THE TRANSITION PERIOD: 2004 – 05 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY OF THE RESULTS-FOCUSED TRANSITION FRAMEWORK 13TH JANUARY 2004: DRAFT 4

INTRODUCTION

1. After several decades of peace and prosperity, and a period characterized by poverty and poor governance, the people of Liberia have endured 15 years of destructive civil wars and political failure. The political process underway now, building on the Comprehensive Peace Agreement of August 2003, and leading into the 2004 – 2005 transition period, offers a vital opportunity for national recovery. It is being described, in Monrovia, as “probably Liberia’s last chance, but certainly the best opportunity yet”. Securing international support for the two year transition process is critically important. The attached document – developed jointly by the National Transitional Government of Liberia (NTGL), the World Bank, the UN system and other national and international stakeholders - indicates a number of priority outcomes to be pursued during this transition period, and results that are expected as the transition evolves.

THE CONTEXT

2. During the transition period we should expect to see the repair of social and economic systems, recovery of communities, and laying the institutional foundation for Liberia’s transformation into a progressive, productive, stable and secure democracy. These can only be initiated if the Comprehensive Peace Agreement is scrupulously implemented, with stewardship by a cohesive, accountable and adequately trained transition government. The transition government is to be replaced, after two years, by a democratically elected legislature and executive.
3. Activities implemented during the transition period will be taken forward under the authority of the NTGL. But absorption and implementation capacity is limited at present and intensive, rapid and focused support is needed now, from a variety of stakeholders. These include Liberian professionals (in the diaspora as well as in country), Liberian institutions and civil society, UNMIL, NGOs, donor agencies, private entities, Bretton-Woods institutions, UN agencies, funds and programmes. If resources are to be used effectively, in ways that contribute to in-country capacity, stakeholders must work together as an alliance. Their efforts should be focused on a set of agreed priorities, and well co-ordinated.
4. The transition will only be successful if violence is contained, environments are secure and individual, and institutional, behaviour reflects respect for the rule of law and human rights. Former combatants must be disarmed, demobilized, and reintegrated into society. Refugees and internally displaced people, too, must be enabled to return home. Revitalised community structures, functioning basic services and government that responds to the interests and needs of all people will provide the kind of climate that encourages both community stability and potential for prosperity in both rural and urban areas. Particular attention must be paid to the needs of vulnerable groups.
5. Given the extremely damaged condition of services, systems and institutions in Liberia, the continuous challenges faced by Liberia’s people as they go about their daily lives, and the urgent need to initiate the transition, a process is underway to identify needs and focus on priority outcomes to be achieved during the transition period. This Needs Assessment process was designed by the NTGL and international stakeholders in Monrovia, mid-November 2003. The scope of the Needs Assessment reflects the programme set out by the transitional government in October 2003. It also draws on, and incorporates,

the analysis, findings and plans developed in November 2003 for the Common Humanitarian Action Plan (and Consolidated Appeal) for Liberia in 2004.

6. The work of the Needs Assessment, during December 2003, was concentrated on 13 priority sectors. These were drawn together in nine clusters. Specific attention is given to gender, HIV/AIDS, environment, human rights, shelter, the timber industry and media – which are being handled as cross-cutting issues. The most urgent needs in the priority sectors were established through consultations involving government, NGOs, agencies, the UN Mission, IMF and the World Bank, co-ordinated by a group of designated task managers. Because of travel limitations in-country resulting from UN-wide security restrictions, secondary data are used extensively.
7. The Needs Assessment incorporates a Framework for priority outcomes, and expected results (the RFTF) for 6, 12, 18 and 24 months. The template for the framework was devised at a national workshop involving national stakeholders, the World Bank, donors, UN agencies and others 20 – 21 November 2003.
8. The success of the transition depends on (a) the development of capacity in Liberian institutions for transparent management of activities and resources; (b) the availability of resources to support the sustained implementation of a series of inter-dependent and high priority action; and (c) the release of these resources, when needed, in a timely manner. The revenue currently available in Liberia is insufficient to pay salaries of essential civil servants at an adequate level, let alone provide essential equipment or permit rehabilitation of basic services like water and electricity. External resources – made available as grants and soft loans – are an essential pre-requisite for success. But donors will only invest in the transition if they are convinced that their resources are properly managed. And the capacity of government officials to plan programmes, manage finance, deliver services and monitor progress is limited by an absolute lack of facilities and equipment, critical shortages of human resources, and continuing insecurity in some areas.
9. Those who are considering support for Liberia's transition want to be able to assess the implementation capacity of local and national institutions, and to be sure that these institutions are able to absorb and make use of any resources they receive. If they are not convinced that in-country capacity is adequate, they will only provide resources on the condition that they are channelled through groups they know to be capable, outside of the government.
10. In order to support the building of in-country public sector capacity, the priority at the start of this transition period is to ensure adequate management capacity – particularly the management of finances - within public institutions. Other priorities include (a) nurturing community- level capacity that supports economic growth, (b) ensuring the rule of law through minimal judicial, police and corrections services and the protection of human rights, (c) reducing public uncertainty, and (d) increasing confidence, among donors and private investors, that essential services can be delivered where needed – effectively and efficiently. This means a co-ordinated effort that addresses agreed priorities in ways that use scarce resources well.
11. The present exercise feeds in to the Liberia Reconstruction Conference on February 5th and 6th, at which the international community will establish a partnership for Liberia. Ideally this partnership will be characterized by predictable and consistent support for (a) the activities that are most needed in the country, (b) their effective implementation, and (c) the monitoring of progress. The NGTL recognizes that an overambitious or unrealistic set of priority outcomes would be counterproductive. Hence NGTL is putting forward a visionary document with credible and realistic goals and feasible implementation mechanisms. It envisages that systems will be established for the regular monitoring of implementation and results by all stakeholders, evaluation of achievements and auditing of resources.

THE PROCESS

12. More than 40 officials and Ministers from the Government have so far been directly involved in detailed work within individual sectors, themes and clusters. A similar number from civil society and NGOs have been involved, too. Around 40 persons from the World Bank and UN system have contributed. Many more persons were involved in the consultations for the sector and thematic studies.

13. The RFTF matrices – which reflect priority outcomes – were synthesized on December 31st and then discussed with over 100 persons drawn from different constituencies of legislators and Ministers, the former warring factions and civil society representatives at a series of consultations January 5th and 6th. They were further revised by a combined NGTL, World Bank and UN working group January 7th.
14. An executive summary of the matrices will then be presented at, and endorse by, a high level summit involving key elements of the NTGL, ECOWAS, the African Union, World Bank, UN and others, in Monrovia, on January 8th.
15. The matrices will be presented, by the NTGL, to a reconstruction conference preparatory meeting in New York on January 15th. In the succeeding week, a summary Needs Assessment text and tables of projected financial requirements will be developed to accompany the synthesized RFTF matrix. Information packs containing these documents will be disseminated to organizations, governments, media and institutions involved in the February 5th – 6th reconstruction conference during the last week of January 2004.
16. The matrices and summary text will provide a basis against which those wishing to invest in the transition can make pledges of support, release tranches of funds for specific purposes, and monitor the use made of the support.
17. The matrices are also being used as a source for information to be communicated - to Liberian decision makers, to the parties to the Comprehensive Peace Agreement, and to the general population, as well as to interested parties outside the country - about plans for and progress of the transition process.

THE RESULTS-FOCUSED TRANSITION FRAMEWORK

18. The underlying vision for the Transition Framework is the establishment of a secure and enabling environment leading to democratic elections, recovery and reconstruction through the scrupulous implementation of the Accra agreement under a cohesive, accountable and adequately resourced Transition Government at the service of the Liberian people
19. The following table indicates the kinds of priority outcomes that are to be pursued during the transition process.

N°	CLUSTER & SECTOR	Priority Outcome by December 2005
1	SECURITY:	
1.1	UNMIL DEPLOYMENT	Public and business confidence increased, and greater security ensured, through UNMIL troop deployment
1.2	ARMED FORCES RESTRUCTURING	Establishment of armed forces' role in building peace and supporting democratic transformation; restructuring, retraining and deployment initiated in accordance with the Comprehensive Peace Agreement.
2	DISARMAMENT, DEMOBILISATION, REHABILITATION AND REINTEGRATION OF EX-COMBATANTS (DDRRP):	Successful disarmament and demobilisation of 38,000 – 53,000 female and male ex-combatants (XCs) and collection of 70,000 weapons by December 2004; child XCs demobilized and fully reintegrated; essential restorative support, counselling and referral services initiated for all ex-combatants, at least 50% of adult XCs reintegrated into Liberian society by December 2005 through enhanced community absorption capacity.
3	REFUGEES, RETURNEES and INTERNALLY DISPLACED PERSONS (IDPs):	Essential restorative support (transport, household items, food assistance etc), social protection, legal assistance and basic social services (health, education, water and sanitation) for up to 350,000 returnees, 73,000 third country refugees in Liberia and 490,000 IDPs with inputs to community-level institutions that encourage self-sufficiency of returnees and IDPs, and their effective reintegration.

N°	CLUSTER & SECTOR	Priority Outcome by December 2005
4	GOVERNANCE, DEMOCRATIC DEVELOPMENT AND RULE OF LAW:	Immediate priority given to the establishment of institutions necessary for security and the rule of law, particularly those required by the August 2003 Comprehensive Peace Accord (CPA), and to the essential functions of government during the transition period.
4.1	PUBLIC SECTOR CAPACITY	Government functions implemented through streamlined, efficient national institutions, executed by a restructured, recapacitated, professional and merit-based public sector that works as a disciplined and credible entity; made possible through focused technical assistance and rehabilitation of essential public infrastructure.
4.2	LOCAL GOVERNMENT :	Improved capacity for planning, co-ordinating and delivering essential services at the local level
4.3	THE JUDICIARY	Jump starting of essential criminal courts; foundations laid for a professional, independent and credible judiciary. Mechanisms (including criminal courts) re-established to facilitate the rule of law.
4.4	POLICE SERVICE	Rapid establishment of an interim Police Force, staffed by well-vetted personnel with essential equipment and training; foundations laid for the new professional Liberian Police Service.
4.5	CORRECTION SYSTEM	Reform of the correction system so that it functions more in line with international best practice.
4.6	DEVELOPMENT OF CIVIL SOCIETY	Foundations laid for a strong vibrant and involved civil society with civil society organizations enabled to exercise their rights (freedom of opinion, expression and assembly, no discrimination), develop community-driven accountability mechanisms and access legal aid, including for women and vulnerable populations.
4.7	HUMAN RIGHTS	National reconciliation fostered through the establishment of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC); realization of human rights facilitated through Independent National Human Rights Commission (INHRC) and programs addressing gender, protection and human rights concerns.
4.8	MEDIA	Fostering public dialogue, encouraging freedom of expression and promoting confidence in democratic institutions through functioning and independent public-service media.
5	ELECTIONS:	
5.1		Prepare for, and ensure the holding of, free, fair, and transparent elections, with full participation of the electorate, in accordance with the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA).
6	BASIC SERVICES:	
6.1	HEALTH AND NUTRITION	Nation-wide action to increase the Liberian peoples' access to effective Primary Health Care (PHC) and referral services - targeting priority health conditions (HIV/AIDS, malaria, TB, diarrhoea, mental illness, childhood and maternal illness, malnutrition and violence-related conditions), and promoting health (particularly women's health) - through community-based health interventions implemented through local-level organizations, civil society, functionally rehabilitated key health facilities, strengthened capacity in the Ministry of Health at central and local levels, and through the re-training and re-equipping of health personnel.

N°	CLUSTER & SECTOR	Priority Outcome by December 2005
6.2	EDUCATION	Rehabilitation and revitalisation of at least 25% of primary and secondary schools, the vocational training system, and part of the higher education system, with particular emphasis on education for girls; fulfilling immediate needs for capacity and institution building (incl. teacher training, supplying textbooks and essential equipment).
6.3	COMMUNITY WATER AND SANITATION	Improve the functioning of community based water and sanitation systems in Monrovia and other urban areas with an emphasis on better access to water with the use of household water treatment systems, and better access to latrines; improve functioning of community-based water and sanitation systems in rural areas (with an initial focus on larger villages) with an emphasis on better access to potable water from improved sources and to low-cost excreta disposal systems.
7	RESTORATION OF PRODUCTIVE CAPACITY AND LIVELIHOODS:	
7.1	AGRICULTURE	Availability of, and access to food in rural and urban areas improved, and food security achieved; by improving vulnerable groups' access to food (via food input and cash-based safety nets); by restoring agricultural-based productive capacity (incl. post-harvest preservation facilities), livelihoods and incomes; by promoting the revival of the rural economy (via reconstruction initiatives); community-based development sustained through local capacity building, inputs to increase food and cash crop production, skills training, rehabilitation of rural infrastructure and sustainable use of forest resources. First stages of establishing a conducive environment for domestic and foreign private investment in national resource development and both raw and processed agricultural products.
7.2	FISHERIES	Inland aquaculture revived through rehabilitation of hatcheries and fish ponds, equipment and materials and microfinance. Artisanal coastal fish production restored through provision of equipment and microfinance (grants and credit) to cooperatives and fisher groups.
7.3	COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT	Programme to jump-start recovery of Liberia's communities, with particular attention to the needs of women, and returnees, underway in selected communities, incorporating the approach to community-based planning envisaged for DDDR, and RRRR – see 3.4, and resulting in the economic revival of communities and increased earning and employment opportunities.
7.4	SOCIAL SAFETY NETS - GROUPS WITH SPECIFIC NEEDS	Options for safety nets to support disabled and elderly people, pregnant women and new mothers, street and working children, and others who are vulnerable, are examined and acted on.
8	INFRASTRUCTURE:	
8.1	POWER	Rebuilt capacities of Liberia Electricity Corporation, electricity services in Monrovia restored, electricity services in rural areas developed, options for private sector participation explored.
8.2	TRANSPORT	Restored road system and stable road management environment established, with maintenance of key paved roads, upgrading of primary network, and rehabilitation of secondary and feeder roads; improved safety of public and freight transport; improved availability and efficiency of air travel (through restoring normal operations of Roberts International Airport and domestic airports), improved operation ports so that they serve national (and neighbouring country) needs for sea transport and have the potential to generate revenue.

N°	CLUSTER & SECTOR	Priority Outcome by December 2005
8.3	COMMUNICATIONS	Fixed telephone services restored; mobile phone network expanded; regulatory framework established.
8.4	URBAN WATER AND SANITATION	As a priority, improve all levels of the management of systems, improve managed water, sewerage and solid waste disposal systems in Monrovia, and establish managed water and solid waste disposal systems in the equivalent of six other urban areas: resulting in three times the current volume of managed water, and an end to sewage contamination of populated areas in Monrovia.
9 ECONOMIC POLICY AND DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY:		
9.1	FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT AND AUDIT	<p>Revenue collection, budgeting, and financial management practices brought into line with current best practice; strengthened accounting systems and practices following establishment of a computerised financial management system.</p> <p>Internal financial control mechanisms established and implemented, and independent audit agency established</p> <p>De-concentration of financial management to different spending centres within NTGL.</p>
9.2	DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY, BUDGET AND STATISTICAL SYSTEM	Legislative control of the budget restored; ensuring the emergence of a results-oriented, accountable budget and expenditure framework laying the foundation for future work on a interim Poverty Reduction Strategy. Collection, processing and analysis of statistical information resumed.
9.3	PUBLIC SECTOR PROCUREMENT	Reform public sector procurement system to enhance transparency, accountability, value for money and reduce risk of procurement-related corruption with an initial focus on health and education.
9.4	FINANCIAL SECTOR	A functioning banking system - based on clear international prudential regulations – is restored, together with an insurance industry – also based on clear international prudential regulations.
	PUBLIC ENTERPRISES	Sound financial management of public enterprises established, and the mandate of public enterprises (PEs) reviewed.
	FORESTRY, EXTRACTIVE INDUSTRIES AND NATURAL RESOURCES MANAGEMENT	Options for policies and improved practice in natural resource management (forestry, diamonds, water etc) examined; forest management practices that balance commercial logging, community use and conservation implemented, with an adequate, transparent, framework for resuming commercial forestry activities which forms the basis of efforts to secure the removal of timber sanctions.
	MANAGING,, MONITORING AND EVALUATING THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE TRANSITION FRAMEWORK	A joint government, international organization and donor mechanism is established - to manage inputs for implementation of the Transition framework (with pooling of national revenue and international funds where appropriate), and to report regularly (to legislators, the general public and development partners) on the achievements and impact of the RFTF, in a transparent and accountable manner.

APPENDIX D

ABOUT THE INTERNATIONAL CRISIS GROUP

The International Crisis Group (ICG) is an independent, non-profit, multinational organisation, with over 90 staff members on five continents, working through field-based analysis and high-level advocacy to prevent and resolve deadly conflict.

ICG's approach is grounded in field research. Teams of political analysts are located within or close by countries at risk of outbreak, escalation or recurrence of violent conflict. Based on information and assessments from the field, ICG produces regular analytical reports containing practical recommendations targeted at key international decision-takers. ICG also publishes *CrisisWatch*, a 12-page monthly bulletin, providing a succinct regular update on the state of play in all the most significant situations of conflict or potential conflict around the world.

ICG's reports and briefing papers are distributed widely by email and printed copy to officials in foreign ministries and international organisations and made generally available at the same time via the organisation's Internet site, www.crisisweb.org. ICG works closely with governments and those who influence them, including the media, to highlight its crisis analyses and to generate support for its policy prescriptions.

The ICG Board – which includes prominent figures from the fields of politics, diplomacy, business and the media – is directly involved in helping to bring ICG reports and recommendations to the attention of senior policy-makers around the world. ICG is chaired by former Finnish President Martti Ahtisaari; and its President and Chief Executive since January 2000 has been former Australian Foreign Minister Gareth Evans.

ICG's international headquarters are in Brussels, with advocacy offices in Washington DC, New York, London and Moscow. The organisation currently operates thirteen field offices (in Amman, Belgrade, Bogotá, Cairo, Freetown, Islamabad, Jakarta, Kathmandu, Nairobi, Osh, Pristina, Sarajevo and Tbilisi) with analysts working in over 40 crisis-affected countries and territories across four continents. In Africa, those countries include Burundi, Rwanda, the Democratic

Republic of Congo, Sierra Leone, Liberia, Guinea, Ethiopia, Eritrea, Somalia, Sudan, Uganda and Zimbabwe; in Asia, Indonesia, Myanmar, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Kashmir and Nepal; in Europe, Albania, Bosnia, Georgia, Kosovo, Macedonia, Moldova, Montenegro and Serbia; in the Middle East, the whole region from North Africa to Iran; and in Latin America, Colombia.

ICG raises funds from governments, charitable foundations, companies and individual donors. The following governmental departments and agencies currently provide funding: the Australian Agency for International Development, the Austrian Federal Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Canadian Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade, the Canadian International Development Agency, the Royal Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Finnish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the German Foreign Office, the Irish Department of Foreign Affairs, the Japanese International Cooperation Agency, the Luxembourgian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Royal Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Swedish Ministry for Foreign Affairs, the Swiss Federal Department of Foreign Affairs, the Republic of China Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Taiwan), the Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the United Kingdom Foreign and Commonwealth Office, the United Kingdom Department for International Development, the U.S. Agency for International Development.

Foundation and private sector donors include Atlantic Philanthropies, Carnegie Corporation of New York, Ford Foundation, Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, William & Flora Hewlett Foundation, Henry Luce Foundation Inc., John D. & Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, John Merck Fund, Charles Stewart Mott Foundation, Open Society Institute, Ploughshares Fund, Sigrid Rausing Trust, Sasakawa Peace Foundation, Sarlo Foundation of the Jewish Community Endowment Fund, the United States Institute of Peace and the Fundação Oriente.

January 2004

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CrisisWatch N°2, 1 October 2003

CrisisWatch N°3, 1 November 2003

CrisisWatch N°4, 1 December 2003

CrisisWatch N°5, 1 January 2004

* The Algeria project was transferred from the Africa Program to the Middle East & North Africa Program in January 2002.

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