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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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### **Conflicts in Africa**

With the end of the Cold War, demise of apartheid in South Africa, and the advent of the new millennium, there were high expectations that Africa's conflicts would be rapidly resolved and the continent would enjoy an unprecedented era of peace and stability. Despite significant progress in the past few years, however, stable peace is still elusive in many parts of the continent. It is difficult to provide a generalized view of African conflicts as they do not resemble the conventional wars and conflicts familiar to the world, but instead they are highly irregular involving a combustible mix of ethnic conflicts, malfeasance and competition for plunder of natural resources. To further exacerbate the situation, there is a growing tendency of countries to intervene in the internal conflicts of their neighbours.

Violent conflicts have continued to be one of the major sources of hunger and malnutrition, which have become perennial features of life in the region. Today, an estimated 23 million people face starvation and death if not provided with emergency assistance. Hunger and despair stalks the regions' fast growing urban slums and refugee camps where millions live in squalor. In the countryside, peasants and nomad pastoralists struggle against the ravages of war, natural calamities and the inefficient and inequitable economies of their shattered countries. In addition, Africa is home to 70% of the adults and 80% of the children who are living with HIV/AIDS in the world.

### **The NEPAD/UNHCR/JICA initiative**

As a program of the African Union, the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) was established in 2001, with an objective to eliminate poverty; improve the socio-economic status of African countries, to facilitate the participation of women in all sectors, and to empower African countries to fully participate in the global economy and create the conditions that would ensure peace and stability.

For the purpose of effective formulation of assistance programs foreseen under the NEPAD Sub-Cluster "Humanitarian Response and Post-Conflict Recovery", JICA and UNHCR have launched a study on the development and causes of conflict in Liberia. The post-conflict situation covers: political governance and transition; security; humanitarian assistance, reconstruction and socio-economic development; human rights, justice and reconciliation; and gender. The report also attempts to make a preliminary set of recommendations based on studies conducted by an independent consulting firm.

### **Conflict and its aftermath**

In April 1980, a group of military officers successfully masterminded a violent takeover of the Liberian government. Headed by Master Sergeant Samuel Doe, the People's Redemption Council (PRC) pledged to institute major political and economic reforms, which would bring about the complete transformation of Liberian society.

After breaking his promise to turn over the government to elected civilians, Doe attempted to promote himself as a popularly chosen civilian president. In addition to perpetuating ethnically driven policies, factors such as rampant corruption, excesses of the army and the security agencies and the general deterioration of socio-economic conditions, eroded the government's popularity and led to the beginning of the seven-year civil war in 1989.

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In December 1989, the National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL) entered the country from Cote d'Ivoire. Led by rebel leader Charles Taylor, the NPFL started a military offensive to overthrow Samuel Doe's government and attacked the Liberian border town of Butoo, in Nimba County. This action sparked a civil war that lasted for seven years, during which former president Samuel Doe was killed on 9 September 1990.

A brief respite from the violence followed in 1993 when the Cotonou Peace Accord was signed, stipulating the terms under which PRC's Transitional Government would be replaced by the Council of State, a newly formed coalition of representatives from the different opposition factions. Although plans for disarmament and elections were agreed upon, on 6 April 1996 the conflict was reignited when the Council of State attempted to arrest Roosevelt Johnson, an ethnic Krahn and leader of the United Liberation Movement for Democracy in Liberia—Johnson Branch (ULIMO-J). Seeking refuge in the military barracks of the former Armed Forces of Liberia (AFL), Johnson rallied ULIMO-J, the Liberian Peace Council (LPC) and remnants of the AFL to engage the NPFL and ULIMO-Kromah Branch in armed combat. This battle staged by the five factions in Monrovia on 6 April 1996 has come to be known as the "Siege of Monrovia" where 3,000 people are said to have been killed and over 80,000 Monrovians displaced.

Subsequently, preparations for the Presidential election proceeded with international oversight and elections were successfully held on 19 July 1997. Although there were reports of some irregularities, the days preceding the elections were relatively peaceful, and the Election Day passed uneventfully. Charles Taylor, the former warlord of the NPFL was elected president, and the UN, Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), and thousands of international observers certified the election as having met international standards.

The following six years under Charles Taylor were characterized by a complete breakdown of legitimate political authority. His regime is primarily remembered for its systematic disregard of political structure and bureaucratic order. Additionally, while ethnicity had always played a major role in Liberian politics, it seems that its peak was reached during the Taylor regime, as it became the foundation on which political, military and commercial activities were based.

Civil war broke out in 2000 when rebels wanted to bring about the dissolution of President Charles Taylor's government. After brutal and widespread fighting, waged by groups such as the Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy (LURD) and later the Movement for Democracy in Liberia (MODEL), President Taylor was forced to abandon his government and seek refuge in Nigeria. A transitional government was then formed under The Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA).

### **Causes and impacts of conflict**

The causes of conflict in Liberia are numerous and varied. They include inter-related structural factors that reach deep into the very foundation of Liberian history and trigger issues that have escalated disputes into cycles of violent conflicts. Structural factors such as the lack of one unifying national identity, economic and political disparities between Americo-Liberians and the indigenous population, lack of good governance, widespread poverty and overall lack of socio-economic development of the Liberian society have played key roles in the conflict. Consistent violations of human rights by consecutive governments, unequal distribution of wealth and resources, changes in control of central authority and the consequent distribution of power, as well as interventions by neighbouring states, all have contributed to the intermittent violence that has characterized the country for the past twenty-five years.

The civil war in Liberia has caused unparalleled tragedy that resulted in the death of hundreds of thousands and displacement of more than half of country's pre-war population. There were

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several large-scale massacres, flagrant violations of human rights, widespread rape and sexual abuse of women and girls, random killings, brutalities, and abuse against children.

While every segment of the Liberian population suffered from the cruelty of the civil war, women and children were the most brutalized and traumatized. Government soldiers and rebel fighters usually abducted women to use them as domestic servants, fighters and sex slaves and were routinely subjected to violence, rape and harassment by all the warring factions. Innocent children were caught in the middle of warring factions and many were forced to fend for themselves. Thousands of very young Liberians, both males and females, were recruited into various rebel militias and security forces, forced to participate or witness many gruesome acts of killing and torture.

Twenty-five years of protracted conflict has destroyed the economy, squandered valuable resources and left Liberia one of the poorest countries in the world. The conflict also resulted in a low life expectancy, high infant, maternal and child mortality, poor access to health services, rising prevalence of HIV/AIDS, dismal school enrolment figures and a low adult literacy rate.

Many of Liberia's natural resources were plundered, used to support the war, or for self-enrichment of political leaders and warlords, and for financing and arming private militias. These resources were inappropriately and illegally exploited, causing far reaching economic and environmental consequences. Such reckless use of national resources has impoverished the population, creating inequities and economic injustices, which continue to fuel animosity and conflicts between various groups.

The conflict unleashed a process of national disintegration that has been fragmenting the nation state into hostile tribal and ethnic based political units. The flourishing of ethnic based political units did not only threaten to tear the nation apart but has turned the entire population against each other, becoming a living example of a Hobbesian state of war, all against all, with no central authority to ensure a modicum of law and order. Rampant corruption has led to the breakdown of government bureaucracy, collapse of the state, the erosion of central authority and discredited institutions. The majority of Liberian citizens, during the conflict lost faith in both political structures and their county's leaders.

The Liberian conflict also destabilized the wider region of the Mano River Union, encompassing Guinea and Sierra Leone, and has contributed greatly to the protracted political crisis and violence of Cote d'Ivoire. The governments of these countries frequently harboured each other's rebel groups and supported cross border incursions, causing widespread instability. There was a complex web of shifting military and political alliances, based on ethnicity, economics, foreign influences and other related factors that have been established over the last two decades. These alliances were made among the Governments of Liberia, Sierra Leone, Côte d'Ivoire, Guinea and the various armed opposition groups, which bear responsibility for much of the violence and chaos of the sub-region.

### **The Comprehensive Peace Agreement**

After prolonged and torturous negotiations, in August 2003, a deal brokered by the US, ECOWAS, and Nigeria finally brought peace to Liberia. The Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) created a Transitional Government with businessperson Gyude Bryant at its head and started a two-year mandate to transform the country into a multi-party democracy with preparations for elections in October 2005.

ECOWAS has sponsored more than seven peace negotiations and has been striving to end the conflict since 1989. The Bamako Ceasefire of November 1990, the Banjul Joint Statement of December 1990, the Lome Agreement of February 1991, the Yamoussoukro I-IV Accords of June-October 1991, the Cotonou Peace Accord 1993, the Abuja Accord Supplement 1996 and

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the CPA 2003 have all been held under the auspices of ECOWAS. In addition to sponsoring peace talks, ECOWAS also deployed several peacekeeping missions throughout the conflict.

The AU was also involved in the negotiations between the government of Liberia and the two rebel movements, and was instrumental in the parties signing a ceasefire and cessation of hostilities agreement. Among other provisions, this agreement provides for the establishment of Joint Verification Team (JVT) of which the AU is a member.

The National Transitional Government of Liberia (NTGL) developed a reconstruction plan, known as the Results-Focused Transition Framework (RFTF). In collaboration with the international community, the NTGL also established the National Task Force in order to strengthen community-based recovery and capacity building in basic services, peace building and rehabilitation of infrastructure and enhance effectiveness at mobilizing resource provisions. A Poverty Reduction Strategy Program (PRSP) was also developed, focusing on the reintegration of former soldiers and rebel fighters into civil society, the rebuilding of physical infrastructure and restoration of basic social services, as well as, securing rule of law, human rights, sector reform, electoral reform and assisting in the management of the election process and job creation. Various NTGL activities and projects designed to strengthen governance, national security and economic growth have been underway for the past two and half years. Overall, the NTGL had made significant progress in implementing measures agreed upon in the CPA.

During the 2.5 years of transition and following successful elections in 2005, the international community continued to be engaged in rebuilding Liberia's shattered institutions and infrastructure, assuring Liberia's security, first through maintenance of the UNMIL peacekeeping presence and eventually through assistance in the restructuring and training of the armed forces, the police and security services.

### **Preliminary recommendations**

The recommendations of this study are offered to further consolidate peace and security, enhance the participatory political system, respect for human rights, and improve humanitarian assistance, reconstruction and development efforts. Most of the recommended measures aim to highlight the importance and urgency of fostering good governance, improving the living conditions of the people and promote sustainable development of Liberia.

### **1. Political governance and transition**

- **Free and fair elections:** Building on its success in the recent national elections, the country needs to further strengthen the democratic process, including by rebuilding confidence in the democratic system through further voter education and delivering out key electoral promises.
- **Vigorous legislature:** Strengthen the legislative framework and enhance the capacity and vocation of parliamentarians, including ensuring the independence, transparency and full accountability to the electorate of the legislative bodies.
- **Independent judiciary:** Re-establish the judiciary and the courts to protect citizens' rights and rebuild rule of law. Improve working conditions and the professional capacity of the judiciary.
- **Government accountability and transparency:** Improve government accountability through measures that enhance transparency, such as, rigorous budgeting, expenditure

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and financial reporting, implementation of audit observations and recommendations and increasing public access to information.

- **Improved civil service:** A professional, efficient and motivated civil service is indispensable for rebuilding people's confidence in the new political process and for the success of good governance initiatives. It is therefore crucial to depoliticize, rationalize and capacitate the civil service, including through improvements in working conditions, recruitment, and institution of performance management system that boost productivity.
- **Decentralization and broader participation:** The state and local governments should take further action to enhance decentralization, political representation and public participation. The decentralization of authority and devolution of power to local levels of government will provide a check against the concentration of powers, which has been the major cause of conflicts in Liberia and responds to demands for broad-based participation in governance processes and economic development.
- **Promotion of Civil Society Organizations:** In the aftermath of the civil war and in light of the fragile post conflict situation, active engagement of Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) needs to be encouraged strongly. The new political order should avail the space for participation of such organizations and the Diaspora.
- **Peacebuilding and reconciliation:** Enhance peace building and conflict resolution with due regard to traditional, inter-cultural values and inter-community alliances. The media can play a major role in advancing the national reconciliation process. The government needs to engage civil society and the private sector in an ongoing dialogue, to strengthen the rebuilding of national confidence and social trust between people of different ethnic, religious, and political background. The divisions that run deep in the social and cultural tissue of Liberia should be addressed at various levels, including through a review of national symbols, the dominant interpretation of history, and formal and non-formal education to rebuild a national identity to which all groups subscribe.

## 2. Security

- **DDR:** Further advance the overall DDR process, which has disarmed more than 100,000 people, to ensure that all remaining weapons are gathered and ex-combatants are fully integrated into the community. More attention and resources should be devoted to providing ex-combatants with information, counselling, and assistance including on:
  - Reintegration opportunities;
  - Civic education;
  - Career counselling;
  - Human rights issues;
  - Psychosocial counselling and;
  - Basic education about HIV/AIDS prevention and treatment.
- **Control of small arms and light weapons:** Implement an arms control program to create a legal framework for firearms ownership and use, registration and licensing and control of their illicit circulation. Such measures could decrease violence and increase confidence in the government and support development efforts in Liberia.
- **Reintegration of refugees and IDPs:** Facilitate the return and reintegration of refugees, IDPs, and other vulnerable rural households through support of income generation programs and promotion of rural employment opportunities in coordinated multi-agency and multi-sectoral activities.

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- **Protection of youth and children:** Institute strong protection measures at refugee camps to ensure that Liberian and other children from the region are protected from recruitment into regional conflicts. Provide ex-child soldiers with adequate humanitarian assistance and socio-economic support to ensure their physical and psychological rehabilitation and social reintegration.

### 3. Humanitarian assistance, reconstruction and socio-economic development

- **Comprehensive humanitarian assistance and better coordination:** Address immediate nutritional and other life-saving needs of populations affected by the crisis, particularly children, women, IDPs, refugees and those affected by HIV/AIDS, based on objective criteria of vulnerability and with focus on food security needs of people at the lowest social strata.
- Assist communities in rehabilitating and rebuilding safe water supply and sanitation systems, schools, clinics, and other facilities that are needed to provide basic social services.
- **Poverty reduction:** Initiate quick impact national projects that would create employment opportunities for the unemployed population who live below the poverty line (85%). This could be done by integrating the needs of returning refugees and IDPs with the resilient population and helping communities to restart cultivation through allocation of land, resolving land disputes, provision of agricultural inputs and credit, and providing an enabling environment for the development and growth of Micro and Small Enterprises (MSEs).
- Initiate human resource development programmes with focus on Medium and Small Enterprises (MSEs) and technical assistance in skills such as business management, finance, and marketing.
- **Development of the private sector:** Establish an environment conducive to domestic and foreign private investment. The development of an indigenous private sector is indispensable to peace building and long-term development. Strengthening the national entrepreneurial class not only creates wealth and generates jobs, but also reduces pressure on the political system to furnish employment. It also contributes to pluralism and the increase of stakeholders in the country's peace and prosperity.
- **Rehabilitation of key infrastructure:** Strengthen the effort in rehabilitation and reconstruction of the country's physical infrastructure, including transport, communication, and power-supply systems.
- **Restoration of social services:** Restructure the public sector and build its capacity for delivery of social services. The impact of the conflict on the provision of services is so devastating that recovery will require the collaboration of all concerned partners.

### 4. Human rights, justice and reconciliation

- **Redress the impact of human rights violations:** Devote early attention in the investigation of serious crimes, fighting impunity, and violations of human rights and humanitarian law in Liberia, and seek justice and/or reconciliation in order to ensure closure to past grievances and sustain the peace. This would require increased regional collaboration considering the impact of the conflict in the region.

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- **Ensure rule of law:** There is little judicial infrastructure in Liberia's interior, and justice is largely dispensed by customary law courts presided over by elders or local leaders. This has made it difficult for Liberians to access the formal legal system and obtain equal justice for men and women, youth and elders. Enhancing rule of law would require strengthening the justice sector, civilian police capacities and improvements in the corrections system.
- **Ensuring equality before the law:** Equality before the law should be assured for all Liberians and systematic discrimination and repression under the sanction of law, against ethnic, political, and religious groups as well as individuals must be stopped.

### 5. Gender

- **Women and employment:** Strengthen programs for poverty reduction and support of employment creation and income generation opportunities in agriculture and small and micro scale industries, including through the provision of support in the form of inputs, technology, training, advisory services and micro credit schemes with particular focus on women and girls.
- **Availability of social services:** Address the needs for social services of women and girls through community-level reintegration, attending to their specific needs, including health and medical services, basic education, skills and personal development, trauma counselling, start-up grants, micro-credit schemes, and reunification with families for victims of abduction and other forms of forced separation.
- **Fight against gender-based violence:** Institute policies and legislative protection against sexual and gender-based violence (GBV). Provide support to victims of GBV, including through advocacy activities and provision of medical, psychological, social, legal and economic support.
- **Political participation of women:** Advocate for the active political participation of women and introduce instruments of Affirmative Action to increase their percentage in political institutions and decision-making processes.