

Legacy of UN Mission in Liberia tied to former President Johnson Sirleaf, says senior UN official

28 December 2017 – The legacy of Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, the outgoing President of Liberia, is connected to the legacy of the United Nations Mission in the country ([UNMIL](#)), which will wind down in March after 15 years of operations, a senior UN official said.

In an interview with *UN News*, Farid Zarif, the head of UNMIL, said that UN peacekeepers, working with national authorities, managed to bring peace and stability to the country, to help it rebuild and to pave the way for renewed economic growth.

“We are very confident that with the departure of UNMIL Liberia will be in a far better situation to meet the challenges of the future,” Under-Secretary-General Zarif said, despite continued vulnerabilities and fragilities.

Liberia is a very rich country endowed with many natural resources, he added. With improved management of those resources, along with a diversification of the macroeconomy and support from the international community, the country has the potential.

“[Ms.] Sirleaf should be credited for providing a vision for the future of Liberia. And if elements of that vision are implemented, Liberia will soon become a self-sustaining society,” Mr. Zarif said.

“Her legacy is very much connected to the legacy of the UN mission in Liberia.”

Ms. Sirleaf will step down in January after two terms in office. Liberians are still waiting for the official announcement of her successor following Tuesday’s second round of vote.

Former Nigerian leader Olusegun Obasanjo, who is a member of the UN Secretary-General’s High-Level Advisory Board on Mediation, is due to arrive in the capital, Monrovia, today.

[Secretary-General](#) António Guterres requested Mr. Obasanjo to travel to Liberia as part of the UN’s continued good offices engagement – a term for third-party assistance in mediating a conflict – and to help support an orderly and peaceful transition of power. This would be the first time one democratically elected leader in Liberia hands over power to another in more than 70 years.

Ahead of the 26 December election, as well as the first round of vote on 10 October, UNMIL supported national election officials, even delivering voting materials by plane. Other branches of the UN provided technical assistance. All security duties were transferred over to Liberian officials in June of

last year.

UNMIL also carried out its good offices engagement with community members, bringing together local leaders, faith-based organizations, the media, women and youth, among others.

“We thought that based on past experiences of violence, we need to really invest in preventive diplomacy,” Mr. Zarif said.

“Together we have been very successful in avoiding all forms of violence. Even demonstrations did not happen, let alone mortalities or casualties. So we are very happy with the success of the good offices.”