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## Stakeholders Validate GC Annual Governance Report (AGR) on Elections

The Governance Commissions on Thursday March 9, 2017 held a public presentation/validation on its draft Annual Governance Report (AGR) in anticipation for inputs from stakeholders. The draft **AGR on Liberia's Electoral System** was first released to the public for validation on February 27, 2017 and includes recommendations to assure that all players in the 2017 elections understand and agree to the rules of the process, and their role and responsibilities to the process. The program was held at the James Fromoyan Conference Hall at NEC.

Commissioner Othello Gongar, in his opening remarks, noted that the AGR was in keeping with the mandate of the Commission, and that the study's analysis, recommendations and Conclusion were all done by GC. The AGR also reviewed Liberia's electoral systems, analyzed data including the Liberian Constitution and election laws, and made recommendations based on findings, information gathered, and interpretation of the Commission.



For her part, National Election Commission's Vice Chair Madam Sarah Toe acknowledged receipt of the draft AGR from GC noting that NEC is perusing the document in order to make the necessary inputs. Madam Toe added that the report, as read so far, captures and addresses most of the issues and problems experienced by NEC. She said it was necessary for political parties to read the document and get a better understanding of Liberia's electoral system.

Governance Commission made a power point presentation of its Annual Governance Report. It is anticipated that the Report will help inform and assure an inclusive and participatory process that will assure the holding of free, fair, credible, democratic 2017 national elections in a peaceful environment.

The Report highlights the following recommendations:

1. ***That elections be used as an opportunity to strengthen citizenship*** commitment to Liberia;
2. ***That election be used as a platform for debate of national development issues:*** Election contests must serve as platform for informed and responsible debates among parties and candidates on policy issues and priorities. Political parties and candidates must be pressed to do so;

3. ***That elections be used to intensify and expand civic education*** using the National Curriculum on Civic Education, delivering civic education modules to schools and for non-formal education purposes to deepen and broaden understanding of the importance of elections as responsibility of citizens; and
4. ***That the Monitoring and strengthening of voter education; the Strengthening of voter roll verification; and to Strengthen the capacity and monitoring of campaign spending and financial flows into political parties are all priority issues.***

NEC lacks the capacity to singly monitor campaign financing and financial flows into political parties; therefore, NEC must enter cooperation agreements with appropriate entities such as the LACC, FIU, and other integrity organizations, where consistent with the Elections Law, to monitor campaign financing and financial flows into political parties as prescribed in NEC's mandate.

Other recommendations include using elections to:

1. ***Enhance political parties and their agents' commitment to integrity of the voting (including collation), result announcement and complaint filing processes;*** that NEC set a requirement of the minimum numbers of party agents to be recruited by each party and provide sound training to them, and require and monitor their full deployment.
2. ***Establishing national elections monitoring networks and situation room;:***
3. ***Recruitment, training and equipping of adequate numbers of election magistrates and hearing officers;***
4. ***Rationalization of NEC's operational processes:*** Strengthening the internal processes such as procurement, logistics and human resources capabilities, particularly at times of scarce resources and urgency are invaluable.
5. ***Addressing capacity gaps:*** Improving Communications, M & E and other staffing capabilities as an ongoing undertaking. Ongoing voter registration is uncovering significant gaps in capacity of those engaged in registering voters.
6. ***Supporting NEC's budget:*** The GoL must prioritize the funding of NEC's budget and provide to NEC all the resources needed for the 2017 elections by the end of the first quarter of fiscal 2017-2018.
7. ***Elections Security Arrangements:*** The joint security arrangements established by the Inspector General of Police under the oversight of the Minister of Justice and with the cooperation of NEC need to be supported by the Government and international partners.
8. ***Aligning NEC's process of certification with Supreme Court's decisions:*** Early certification of candidates have led to the filing of numerous writs of prohibition and the exacerbation of tension, confusion and negative aspersion on the electoral system. The Supreme Court and NEC would do well to ensure expeditious and properly aligned processes of Supreme Court ruling and NEC's certification.



*Cross section of Participants at the AGR Launching program at NEC Conference Hall*

9. **Address the 10-year residency requirement stipulated in the Constitution:** Twice ruled as inapplicable, there must be a pronouncement on this constitutional provision.

Lead responsible parties: NEC and the Supreme Court

10. **Declare Code of Conduct exclusion rule inapplicable:** Part V Sections 5.1 and 5.2 of the Code of Conduct exclude from candidacy, high officials of the Executive Branch of Government who did not resign from their positions within a given period of time. In view of the doubts about the constitutionality of the provision (as it is now under challenge) and the disruptive effect its enforcement will have on the 2017 elections, **the provision should be considered inapplicable to the 2017 Presidential and Legislative Elections in the same manner and spirit the 10-year constitutional provision was considered inapplicable to the 2005 and 2011 elections.**

Meanwhile the Governance Commission has clarified that its draft AGR recommendations on the Code of Conduct were mere suggestions to stimulate discussion and a possible way forward to clear doubts about the Constitutionality of the provision.

The Supreme Court has ruled **3 for and 2 against** that Part V Sections 5.1 and 5.2 of the Code of Code is law and must be fully adhered to.

### **GC Holds TOT Workshop for National Vision Youth Club.**

The Governance Commission has held the first in a series of Training of Trainers (TOT) workshop for Liberia's National Vision Clubs. The workshop brought together 30 participants from 26 of the youth organizations that participated in the 2012 National Vision Conference held in Gbarnga Bong County. These organizations include universities and political parties' youth wings among others.

The youth TOT two – day workshop ran from January 26-27, 2017 at the Isaac Tugbeh Wreh Community Hall in ST. Paul Bridge Community and organized by GC and youth organizations that participated in the 2012 National Vision Conference. Highlights of the workshop included a presentation on the National Vision 2030: Liberia Rising, and group presentations.



*Participants at the National Vision Club Training of Trainers (TOT) workshop*



*Mr. Stephen Manley, GC's Executive Director*

The 2012 National Vision Conference itself brought together more than 500 delegates representing Liberians from all 15 counties, sectors, religions, professional groupings, political parties, and civil society organizations, the diaspora, and opinion leaders in Liberia. International observers/partners and organizations also supported the Conference.

It can be recalled that at the end of the National Vision Conference in 2012, President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf

made an official presentation of the document to the youths of Liberia noting that the Vision represented the people's future and therefore Liberia's future leaders (Liberian youths) to guide and protect.

The Conference was held under the aegis of Her Excellency President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf with the Ministry of Planning and Economic Affairs and the Governance Commission serving as sponsors. The Conference was organized by a 21-member National Conference Committee, provided space for Liberians to select a possible future, and ended the design phase of the visioning process.

The Vision is also an expression of love for country and commitment to mobilize resources to achieve our aspirations as expressed in the Vision Statement: **ONE PEOPLE, ONE NATION, UNITED FOR PEACE AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT.**

**The following are excerpts of the National Vision document.**

“Components of the Vision gleaned from retrospective and structural analyses of Liberia as a system and consultations throughout the country and abroad include an economically prosperous people, a socially and demographically harmonious nation united in diversity, a democratic political system, an environmentally beautiful flourishing country, and a country culturally vibrant, and technologically innovative. Such components of the Vision suggest a holistic approach to development, addressing at once the social, economic, political, environmental, cultural and technological aspirations of the Liberian people.

Three Conclusions can be drawn from the deliberations that led to the adoption of this Vision:

1. Many of Liberia's problems are deeply rooted in the country's social fabric, economic structure and governance arrangements. Others find their roots in the external environment. As the issues at stake are structural and systemic, long-term perspectives and timeframes are required to address them satisfactorily.
2. Liberians believe the Developmental State Scenario, as contained in the visioning process, is the optimal framework for sustainable growth and development. This scenario suggests a significant departure from the current resource-based development model to a model that is knowledge-based, open to strategic intervention, and supportive of social capital development.
3. The development contemplated will be possible only if we the Liberian people are committed to change. Citizens' participation in the formulation and



implementation of the vision will therefore be critical for its success and sustainability.

Now that the Vision has been determined, the operationalization or action stage should follow. The challenge can be expressed as moving from what we desire to creating the conditions that will make the desirable achievable. Against this background, the participants have adopted three recommendations:

1. A clear Strategy for dissemination of the Vision throughout the country and the Diaspora.
2. A clear Strategy for operationalization that includes:
  - A clear alignment or re-alignment of the Agenda for Transformation and the National Reconciliation Roadmap with the National Vision.  
Issues of particular importance flagged by the participants include:
    - Making quality education available to all citizens;
    - Developing macro-policy frameworks conducive for sustainable growth and development;
    - redefining national symbols to reflect our unity;
    - working toward agreeing on a national language (s) for Liberia;
    - providing equal access, especially for persons living with disabilities, to opportunities for development and participation in national affairs;
    - developing and instilling in our youths moral and ethical value systems;
    - developing policy measures to address issues of youth education, responsibility and empowerment;
    - developing policy measures to deepen and make more inclusive our system of democratic governance;
    - Effecting policy measures required to support and enhance greater national ownership of natural resources;

- Effecting policy measures that ensure improved participation for Liberians in their economy through significantly strengthened access to capital and an enhanced role in gross capital formation;
- Developing policy measures that ensure an accelerated transition of the Liberian economy from reliance on extractive export led growth to improving the share of domestic manufacturing;
- Developing policies, programs and institutions that promote decentralization and local ownership of the Vision implementation;
- Developing policy measures and initiatives to enhance cultural identity and national reconciliation.
- Strengthening regional cooperation and improve relations with our neighbors.
- Developing policies and programs that accelerate infrastructural development;
- Strengthening rights, including gender-based rights, rights affecting persons living with disabilities, human rights, and the right of the child.

3. Develop a clear post –Conference implementation, coordination and Monitoring and Evaluation mechanisms that support the achievement of the Vision.”



Presentation of the Vision statement to the President by Conference Chairperson, Ms. Kula Fofana on behalf of participants (Left); President Sirleaf presents Vision statement to the civil society/youths and charged them with its implementation (Right).