



# SYNERGY

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Senator George Weah of CDC

## 20 Political Parties Sign Farmington River Declaration



Vice President Joseph N. Boakai of the Unity Party



The Political leader of the ANC attesting his signature to the document



Mr. Charles Walker Brunskine of the Liberty Party



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## Twenty Political Parties Sign Farmington River Declaration

Twenty of Liberia's twenty two political parties have signed on to what is now called "the Farmington River Declaration", committing themselves to the holding of peaceful elections and judicial resolution of election disputes in Liberia.

ECOWAS and other world leaders witnessed the signing of the Declaration during the ECOWAS Summit held on Sunday June 4, 2017 at the Farmington River Hotel in Margibi County.



The signing of the Declaration commits Standard bearer and their political party to ensuring that the 2017 presidential and legislative elections are held within the confines of the law and other international standards pertaining to free, fair, transparent democratic elections.

The thirteen count resolution commits signatories to resolving election disputes



through mediation and/or the Courts; preventing election violence; peaceful political campaign activities; and to closely work with law enforcement agencies to ensure that they effectively perform their duties before, during and after the 2017 elections.

The Political parties also called on Government to set up a Toll free hotline to help stakeholders monitor and report on situations that have the propensity to derail the peace during and after the elections.

These political leaders also promised to hold themselves accountable in promoting effective political leadership of the campaign against electoral violence, impunity and injustice.

The Political party leaders have meanwhile mandated the mediation committee, of which the Inter-Religious Council is a part, to consult with the National Legislature to act with deliberate urgency to pave the way for the peaceful conduct of the 2017 elections.

## **Liberia and EU delegates Discuss Consolidating Peace and Development**

The Liberian Government and the European Union on June 8, 2017 held its fifth Political dialogue under the theme **“Consolidating Peace and Economic Development”** at the Cecil Dennis Auditorium of the Foreign Ministry. The meeting was Co-chair by Liberia’s Foreign Affairs Minister Madam Marjon Kamara and Ambassador Tina Intelmann/Head of EU delegation to Liberia. At the end of the deliberations, the parties issued a joint press release.

In their opening statements the Co-chairs both described their bilateral relationship as “close with shared achievements”. Both parties discussed a range of issues but with emphasis on the October Presidential and Legislative Elections, the electoral process, and peaceful transitions from the present to the next government by January 2018. The meeting also placed emphasis on the importance of sustaining development projects and reform initiatives through the administrative transition.

**Discussion issues centered around political and security matters, Economic and Trade issues, human rights, and “the last mile plan”.** Under Political and security matters the Government informed the EU on preparations for the holding of national elections in October and the smooth transfer of power in January 2018. To this the EU expressed confidence in NEC’s capacity and political parties’ commitment to peaceful elections come October and resolution of electoral disputes through mediation of the courts.

The European Union commended Liberia for its positive track record in upholding fundamental freedoms, and commitment to the abolition of the death penalty. The meeting also discussed the challenges associated with the growing number of pre-trial detention and the EU’s commitment toward helping Liberia address these challenges.

At the same time Liberia remains committed to decriminalization of any violation of freedom of expression, has drafted a bill titled the “Decriminalization of the violation of the Freedom of Expression bill” and submitted same to the Legislature for enactment. The EU however expressed concern over the delay in the passage of the Domestic Violence Bill.

On economic and trade issues a number of initiatives designed to improve, enhance and/or address business regulations and issues affecting trade as well as recommendations to tackle challenges are all being worked on by the government and relevant stakeholders and partners. Such efforts include, with the help of UNCTAD and World Bank, providing clarity on the constitution of the National Trade Facilitation Committee (NTFC) and the formation of the Business Reform Committee to coordinate reforms to improve Liberia’s indicators for the World Bank index.

Liberia, since 2014, has undergone three years of recession and hopes to experience in 2017 a return to economic growth, though revenue collection remains below expectations reflecting unabated economic challenges. The National budget 2017/2018 places top most priority on the holding of the presidential and legislative elections scheduled for October 10, 2017 and election security.

The EU commended government’s actions/measures to cut down recurrent costs in its budget including cuts to allowances, travels and reductions in goods and services budgets, and underlined the need for all three branches of government to exercise restraint and leadership especially during this time of when ordinary people are experiencing challenges. In the midst of Liberia’s economic troubles, international donors and partners’ support have dwindled.

### **Governance Commission Releases Finalized Copy of its AGR on Elections**

The Governance Commission has released the finalized copy of its Annual Governance Report (AGR) on Elections (June 2017) urging political parties, candidates and stakeholders *to strengthen commitment to peaceful, violence-free elections through solemn declaration, and commitment to an ethical code of conduct.*

The GC Annual Governance report also supports calls for the monitoring of political parties' and independent candidates' source of funding in keeping with section 7 of the new elections law of Liberia. Section 7 of the new Elections law of Liberia highlights, under elections campaign, expenses remittances of funds from outside Liberia to political parties or independent candidates' and restriction; limitation of election expenses; accounts of political parties and requirements for examination; campaign contributions, expenses and reports; and enforcement of reporting of contributions and expenses among others.

Some political parties have flaunted newly purchased cars, motorbikes and other election related materials which many have described as possible violations of the New Elections Law of Liberia. GC therefore urges NEC to work with national integrity institutions such as Liberia Anti-Corruption Commission (LACC), Financial Intelligence Unit (FIU), and others to monitor campaign financing and financial flows into political parties as prescribed in NEC's mandate.

The Annual Governance Report (AGR) also highlights the use of elections as a platform for debate of national development issues, and that political parties and candidates should use such platforms for responsible debate of policy issues and priorities.

Other recommendations put forward in the AGR include Recruitment, training and equipping of adequate numbers of election magistrates and hearing officers; and strengthening of capacity and monitoring of campaign spending and financial flows into political parties.

The actions of election magistrates and hearing officers have been at the center of most elections disputes that have reached the Supreme Court. The AGR also recommends that NEC should set a requirement of the minimum numbers of party agents to be recruited by each political party, provide sound training for them, and monitor their full deployment".

The election of a new government in 2017 and inauguration in January 2018 will mark the first since 1944 where executive authority will be transferred from one elected president to another. These elections are expected to lay the political foundations upon which Liberians will continue to maintain peace, advance development and pursue reconciliation.

The AGR contributes to the strengthening of the electoral system and assures the holding of peaceful and credible elections in Liberia. It, among other issues,

examines the institutions, actors, rules, procedures and processes that constitute the electoral system of Liberia. It also seeks to identify issues for post-elections electoral reform and to elevate consciousness about how elections are important to peace and development in Liberia. More information on the GC AGR can be found on the GC website- [www.governancecommissionlr.org](http://www.governancecommissionlr.org).