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## **Liberia's Transformation Agenda Inseparable From That of Africa**

Governance Commission's Chairman, **Dr. Amos Sawyer** says the success of Liberia's Transformation depends on its transformation agenda being embedded within the overall transformation agenda of Africa, adding that **“the story of Liberia's transformation must be integrated and inseparable from that of the Continent.”**



Since the past twelve (12) years, Liberia has embarked on a transformation journey from violent conflicts and economic underdevelopment to seeking to eliminate poverty incrementally, developing its human resources, adding value to its natural resources through industrialization, and building strong democratic, inclusive and responsive institutions.

The Liberian story is similar and inseparable to that of Africa that is equally transforming from violent conflicts and economic underdevelopment to a continent that is working to eliminate poverty, develop its human capacity, add value to its resources through industrialization, and the building of strong democratic inclusive institutions.

Dr. Sawyer maintained that though Liberia benefits greatly from Europe, the Americas, and Asia, “Liberia's success in pursuing development will be sustainable if powered firstly by self-reliant approaches”, and integrated within the development of our region, as stated in Security Council Resolution 2333 (2016).

Dr. Sawyer delivered the Keynote Address at the recent African Peer Review Mechanism's 14<sup>th</sup> anniversary program and launch of the national sensitization campaign held at the Paynesville Town Hall on March 9, 2017. Liberia is committed to the APRM framework and process which framework is also in line with the Sustainable Development Goals. Liberia is also obligated to ensure that her policies are properly aligned and harmonized within the APRM framework and implemented with integrity.

Dr. Sawyer urged Liberia's National Governing Council of the APRM to consider holding a special sensitization roundtable with senior leaders and candidates of

political parties, including their standard bearers to update them about the APRM and Liberia's obligations under the APRM.

He said adherence to the APRM's governance requirements will assist greatly in ensuring a smooth transition: out-going officials of both the Executive and House of Representatives whose terms have ended to prepare for change; that Public assets be preserved for the in-coming government; that professional staff be separated from political staff and placed within the civil service framework, and transition teams be set up; and that In-coming officials put themselves in a mode for dialogue, realizing that they may have ideas of what to do but do not have full information on policies, programs and resource constraints, among others.



**President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf** served as chief launcher of the APRM Sensitization Campaign Program. The Campaign aims at creating massive awareness about the APRM framework ahead of the conduct of the country's Self-Assessment Study by the Technical Research Institute (TRI). The national sensitization campaign has already been held in each of Liberia's fifteen counties creating awareness on the purpose and benefits of the APRM to ensure its ownership by the Liberian people. President Sirleaf formerly served as Chairperson of the APRM of the African Union forum of Head of States.



For his part, **Minister of Finance and Development Planning, Boima Kamara**, reiterated government's commitment APRM. Eighteen out of the nine outreach and sensitization activities have been held in the 15 counties. Minister Kamara maintained that the APRM will help Liberia evaluate its own performances.

### **Women sign Communiqué Calling for the Advancement of Women and Girls**

Women of Liberia have called on government and other leaders to prioritize gender equality in Liberia. In the Communiqué released at the climax of the International

Women Day celebrations in Paynesville, the women, among other things, urged government to establish a gender monitoring office to ensure full implementation of laws, policies and instruments for the advancement of women.

The Communiqué also recommended the establishment of a national and international platform for leadership - building through mentorship for women and youths to serve as a buildup on the President's Young Professional Program. It is anticipated that this Platform would help strengthen partnership and actions of women leaders at both national and community levels.

Other recommendations of the Communiqué include that government continues the process of legal reform that addresses the issues of inequalities in land ownership, access to finance and justice, etc., and to establish mechanism to transfer experience and technological knowledge between older and younger generations and vice versa. **The Colloquium's Communiqué recommendations are all embedded in the mandate and objectives of the Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection.**



The IWD was held on March 8, 2017 at the Samuel Kanyon Doe Sports Complex in Paynesville. In her opening remarks, President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf noted that since the first launch of the International Women Colloquium in March of 2009, the women of Liberia have cultivated high spirits, and advancing the cause of women representations and decision making in every area including contemporary politics. President Sirleaf described celebrations of women nationally and globally as “a mark of women gains in the struggle for rights and gender equity.” President Johnson-Sirleaf pointed out that this year's celebration is also evidence of women's approval for the level of success in their professional engagements.

Thousands of women turned out this year to celebrate International Women Day held under the global theme: “Be Bold for Change”. The National Theme was “Women Bold in Change for a Better World.”



For her part Gender and Children Protection Minister, Julia Duncan Cassell described the gathering as a historic event for Liberian women and women of the world. Minister Cassell stressed that these gatherings are meant to promote peace, women leadership and women empowerment to build a wholesome functioning society with the participation of women.

In attendance of this year's IWD celebrations in Liberia were prominent international women leaders including former Deputy Prime Minister and now Minister of the Presidency of the Kingdom of Spain and Co-Convener of the International Women Colloquium, Ms. Theresa Fernandes De La Vega, and Donatille Mukabalisa, Speaker of the Chambers of Deputies of Rwanda's Parliament.



Madam Theresa Fernandes De La Vega applauded President Sirleaf for her outstanding leadership, describing the Liberian leader as a champion for women's rights in Liberia (in particular), and Africa in general. Madam Donatille Mukabalisa also praised President Sirleaf and the Liberian people for the warm reception and hospitality accorded her during her visit to Liberia. She observed that "gender empowerment and gender equity are paramount to economic growth and development". She also thanked President Sirleaf for her role in championing women development issues, describing the Liberian leader as a pride of women in Africa.

In support of the IWD program, ECOWAS ambassador to Liberia Ambassador Babatunde O. Ajisomo reiterated that International Women Day is a day set aside to celebrate women in recognition of their invaluable contributions to socio-economic and political development, and a stocktaking moment to assess the extent to which the challenges that confront women and impede their development potentials have been addressed.



Ambassador Ajisomo reminded the audience that “human development cannot be equitable, sustainable and holistic, unless it is cognizance of gender inequalities and the needs of women and men, girls and boys”.

ECOWAS has called on Member-States to take bold actions and initiatives to accelerate the pace of development by implementing commitments, policies and strategies in various Declarations, Protocols, Conventions and Treaties, at international, regional and national levels as well as address emerging challenges mitigating women’s economic empowerment.

### **GC Intensifies Consultations with Senate for Passage of LGA**

The Governance Commission has intensified consultations with the Senate for concurrence for the Local Government Act (LGA) passage. The LGA was since passed by the House of Representatives but awaiting concurrence by the Senate in order to become law.

The Bill is still in the Senate’s committee room on Internal, Governance and Reconciliation. However a number of Senators have expressed support for the passage of the LGA including Lofa County Senator George Tengbeh, Chairman of Senate Committee on rules, order and administration. Senator Tengbeh noted that his support to the Bill’s passage is a manifestation of working in the Liberian people’s interest.

The passage of the Local Government Bill is a major deliverable under Liberia’s peace-building plan which complements the Statement of Mutual Commitments (SMC) between Liberia and the UN Security Council. The UN Security Council Resolution 2282 and 2333 respectively call for implementation of a peace-building plan to sustain peace in Liberia beyond 2017.

The Local Government Bill, when passed into law, will provide legal and regulatory framework for peace-building through the implementation of a decentralized gender-sensitive, participatory, and accountable system of local governance in Liberia.

Under the LGA, government plans to establish County Service Centers, CSC, in each County. It is anticipated that before the end of President Sirleaf's administration government would have established at least one CSC in each of Liberia's fifteen (15) counties. So far, government has established seven (7) CSC to help provide basic services to the Liberian people. These include one in Grand Bassa, Margibi, Bong, Nimba, Grand Cape Mount, Bomi, and Gbarpolu Counties.