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House of Representatives to pass into law 4 key draft legislations

The Governance Commission (GC) has requested the House of Representatives to pass into law 4 key draft legislations currently before it by the end of this session. In a communication to Presiding Officer Honorable Hans Barchue Tuesday September 6, 2016, GC named the 4 draft legislations yet to be cleared by the House of Representatives to include:



Capitol Building

1. Constitutional Amendment propositions which have been cleared by the House's Joint Committees on the Judiciary;
2. The draft Local Government Act with emphasis on Decentralization which has already been reviewed by the House Committee on Governance;
3. The draft Land Authority Act which has been acted upon by the Senate but awaits the concurrence of the House; and
4. The draft Land Act which is yet to be considered by the House of Representatives.

The Governance Commission also urged Presiding Officer Barchue to prevail on his colleagues to become champions of these landmark bills and propositions in support of government's reform agenda.

The Commission, though cognizant of the House's herculean responsibility to enact into law this year's National budget, reminded the House of its responsibility also to the Liberian people to ensure greater participation in service delivery, local governance, affirmation of land rights and the strengthening of our Constitutional order through appropriate amendments.

Meanwhile GC has commended the House of Representatives for its ability to resolve its recent impasse and continue to live up to its Constitutional responsibilities.

VP Boakai to Champion Governance Reform at the Legislature

Vice President Joseph Boakai has pledged to champion the passage of 4 pieces of legislation which are among milestone accomplishments of this administration, and foundations upon which future governments can build.

The 4 draft Acts to be championed by the Vice President at the Legislature include:

1. The draft Local Government Act which has already been reviewed by the House Committee on Governance;
2. The draft Land Rights Act which is yet to be acted upon by the Legislature;



3. The draft Land Authority Act which has been acted upon by the Senate but awaits the concurrence of the House; and
4. Constitutional Amendment propositions which have been cleared by the House's Joint Committee on Governance and the Judiciary.

The Vice President's pledge was part of his response at a briefing session held for him by the



Governance Commission at its office on 9th Street in Sinkor on Monday September 12, 2016. Vice President Boakai noted that the passage of the 4 pieces of legislation is long overdue, considering Liberia's age.

The Vice President also emphasized the importance of completing Liberia's major road networks as part of the physical infrastructure

necessary for ensuring more effective service delivery to the Liberian people. Vice President Boakai further emphasized the importance of protecting government properties and building a professional civil service, among the reform measures which are being promoted by the Governance Commission.

The Vice President commended the Governance Commission for its pivotal role in Liberia's efforts to promote good governance as a critical strategy for sustaining peace, development and democracy in post-conflict Liberia.

In its briefing, the GC pointed out that when approved by the Legislature, the **propositions for Constitutional amendment will not take effect until the holding of a National referendum in 2018**, which is after the 2017 elections. Therefore provisions such as the reduction of tenure of the President, Senators and Representatives will not be retroactively enforced.

In his welcome remarks, the Chairman of the GC Dr. Amos Sawyer lauded the Vice President for the consistency of his support for the work of the GC and thanked him for honoring the GC's invitation. He said that the GC has embarked upon an initiative to encourage the passage of these landmark pieces of legislation before the current legislative session ends and noted the strategic constitutional role of the Vice President in both the Legislative and Executive Branches of Government. The GC is also engaged with the House of Representatives and Senate in this endeavor.

In closing, the Vice Chairperson of the GC, Madam Elizabeth Sele Mulbah thanked the Vice President for always being supportive of the GC.

Deputy Speaker Promises GC the Passage of Draft Acts currently Before the HOR

The Deputy Speaker and Presiding Officer of the House of Representatives (HOR) has assured the Governance Commission (GC) of the passage of the Local Government Act (LGA), and other milestone pieces of legislation before the end of the current legislative session. Deputy Speaker Barchue gave this assurance when he, accompanied by several of his legislative colleagues, visited the GC at the invitation of the Commission for briefings on the work of GC.



Deputy Speaker Barchue also commented on the Constitution amendment propositions and the land rights and land authority bills which are before the House and assured the Commission that they were under active consideration. Deputy Speaker Barchue requested the Governance Commission and Interim Land Task Force to provide clarification on certain provisions of the land bills so as to enable the House speed up their consideration of these bills. He noted that such information will go a long way in depoliticizing the intent of the passage of both Land Rights and Land Authority Acts. Both draft Acts are being debated for legislative input before passage into law.

In its briefing on the Constitution amendment propositions which are before the Legislature, the GC informed the Deputy Speaker of its recommendation that the amendments be approved by the Legislature during the current session and that the national referendum on the propositions be conducted after the 2017 elections. The Commission emphasized that the propositions will not come into force until the referendum in 2018 and will, therefore, not be retroactively applied.

The draft Local Government Act has already been reviewed by the House Committee on Governance; the Constitutional Amendment propositions have been cleared by the House's Joint Committee on Governance and the Judiciary; the draft Land Authority Act has been acted upon by the Senate but awaits the concurrence of the House; while the draft Land Rights Act is yet to be acted upon by the Legislature.

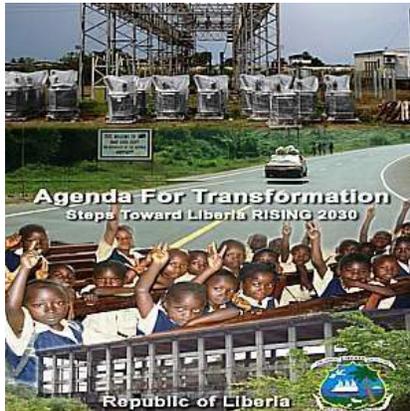
Those accompanying the Deputy Speaker to GC were Representatives Larry Yanquoi, Acarous Gray, Samuel Kogar, Johnson Toe Chea, Nimene Bartekwa, and Julie F. Wiah.

Meanwhile GC's Vice Chairperson Madam Elizabeth Sele Mulbah urged the Deputy Speaker Barchue and entourage to support the election of County Superintendents as they deliberate on their inputs in the Local Government draft Act (LGA). The Lawmakers had raised concern over this issue noting that it was a key reason for the holdup of the passage of the LGA.

Those accompanying the Deputy Speaker to GC were Representatives Larry Yanquoi, Acarous Gray, Samuel Kogar, Johnson Toe Chea, Nimene Bartekwa, and Julie F. Wiah

Government's AFT Relates to MDGs and SDGs

The Governance Commission (GC) has held a number of presentations and discussions Liberia's efforts at implementing the Agenda for Transformation (AFT). The AFT is the government's five-year (2012-2017) development framework to achieving wealth creation and poverty reduction for Liberia and its people. The AFT follows the Lift Liberia Poverty Reduction Strategy (PRS), which raised Liberia from post-conflict emergency reconstruction and positioned it for future growth.



The AFT focuses on achieving 2 key objectives: 1. Attaining middle income status and 2. More inclusive growth; and addresses same through its 4 major Pillars including: I. Peace, security, and rule of law; II. Economic transformation; III. Human development; IV. Governance and public institutions; A fifth pillar was added – V. Cross cutting issues. Details on the AFT will appear in our next Newsletter (October).

The AFT is also in line with the United Nations' Millennium Development Goals which serves as the foundation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). One of such discussions brought to the Commission a UNDP delegation from New York on the SDGs' implementation in Liberia.

The delegation headed by Stan Nkwain paid a follow-up visit to GC on August 11, 2016 as follow to further discuss a GC presentation to the Cabinet on **“Sustaining the Gains ahead of the 2017/18 transition and ensuring successful post transition governance”** in early August. The team's visit to Liberia is also geared toward assessing Liberia's strategy for the implementation of the 17 SDGs. The SDGs were adopted by world leaders at the September 2015 United Nations Summit with a fifteen year agenda.

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), otherwise known as the Global Goals, are a universal call to action to end poverty, protect the planet and ensure that all people enjoy peace and prosperity, and are a top priority of the UNDP 2030 agenda. They reinforce government's AFT and more. Their implementation commenced January 2016. The UNDP Team's visit coincided with Government's assessment of its Agenda for Transformation, AFT.

These SDGs build on the successes of the **Millennium Development Goals, MDGs**, which life span ended in 2015. They include:

1. Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger;
2. Achieve universal primary education;
3. Promote gender equality and empower women;
4. Reduce child mortality;
5. Improve maternal health;
6. Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases;

7. Ensure environmental sustainability; 8. Develop a global partnership for development.

The SDGs have three major expectations to:

1. Mobilize efforts to end all forms of poverty;
2. Fight inequalities; and
3. Tackle climate change

The SDGs go hand in hand with strategies geared toward enhancing economic growth and development and address a range of social needs including health, education, social protection, and job opportunities while tackling climate change and environmental protection. The SDGs are not legally binding but encourages world governments to take ownership and concrete steps to establish national frameworks for the achievements of the 17 goals agreed upon at the 2015 UN Summit.

The SDGs work in the spirit of partnership and pragmatism to provide clear guidelines and targets for all countries to adopt in accordance with their own priorities and environmental challenges. The SDGs tackle the root causes of poverty and highlights the need to make a positive change for both people and planet.

The UNDP plays the lead role in the SDGs implementation and focuses on guiding the policy and funding for the next 15 years. The UNDP global strategic plan focuses on poverty alleviation, democratic governance and peace-building, climate change and disaster risk, and economic inequality. UNDP will provide support to governments to integrate the SDGs into their national development plans and policies. This work is already underway. Achieving the SDGs requires the partnership with governments, private sector, civil society, and citizens.

These SDGs and data (as put forward by the United Nations organizations) include:

1. Ending poverty in all its forms everywhere - United Nations organizations report that 836 million people live in extreme poverty; 1 in 5 persons in developing regions live on less than \$1.25 United States dollars daily, with an overwhelming majority of these people living in Southern Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa; high poverty rates are often found in small fragile and conflict affected countries (like Liberia); 1 in 4 children under 5 years old are stunted, and that some 69 million children also under 5 will die from mostly preventable causes, while 167 million will live in poverty, and 750 million women will have been married as children; and that every day of 2014, forty two thousand (42,000) people abandoned their home to seek protection due to conflict. This number increased tremendously in 2015 with forced migration of people from conflict areas to Europe.

2. Ending hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition, and promote sustainable agriculture – UN Organizations report that 795 million people are hungry today, and an additional of 2 billion people expected to face the same fate by 2050. Also that 1 in 9 people are under-

nourished with a vast majority of these people living in developing countries. Asia is said to be the continent with the most hungry people with an equivalent of 2/3 of the world's total population. Southern Asia has 281 million undernourished people between 2014 -2016. Sub-Saharan Africa (2014 -2016) has a projected 23% of the world's undernourished. Poor nutrition causes 45% of deaths among children under 5 years old equaling 3.1 million annually. 1 in 4 children of the world's children are stunted. Statistics show that 1 in 3 children in developing countries are stunted. 66 million attend primary schools hungry - 23 million of these children live in Africa alone.

3. Ensure healthy lives and promote wellbeing for all – The United Nations report that more than 6 million children die before age 5 annually with increasing number found in Southern Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa. “Despite determined global progress, an increasing proportion of child deaths are in sub-Saharan Africa and Southern Asia. Four out of every five deaths of children under age five occur in these regions”.

4. Ensure inclusive and quality education for all and promote life-long learning – UN organizations report that 57 million children will remain out of school and that half of these children not enrolled are in Sub-Saharan Africa. An estimated 50% of these children live in conflict affected areas. 103 million youth globally lack basic literacy skills and more than 60% of them are females.

5. Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls – According to UN reports, women and girls suffer discrimination and violence, and that though gender equality is not a fundamental rights issue it is a necessary foundation for a peaceful, prosperous and sustainable world. The world leaders agreed that providing women and girls equal access to education, healthcare, decent jobs and representation in political and economic decision making processes will fuel sustainable economics and benefit societies and humanity at large.

6. Ensure access to water and sanitation for all – The UN reports that bad economics or poor infrastructure cause millions of people yearly (most of them children) to die from diseases associated with inadequate water supply, sanitation and hygiene. The reports noted that water scarcity, poor water quality and inadequate sanitation negatively impact food security, livelihood choices and educational opportunities for poor families globally. Natural disasters such as drought afflict some of the world's poorest countries, worsening hunger and malnutrition. UN projects that by 2050 at least 1 in 4 people is likely to live in a country affected by chronic or recurring shortages of water. Water scarcity affects more than 40% of global population and projected to rise. More than 1.7 billion people are currently living in water basins where water use exceeds recharge.

Statistics also show that 2.4 billion people lack access to basic sanitation services such as toilet or latrines. Also more than 80% of wastewater resulting from human activities is discharged into rivers/seas without any pollution removal. Nearly 1,000 children die daily due to preventable water and sanitation related diseases such as diarrhea and cholera. Floods and other water related disasters account for 70% of all deaths related to natural disasters.

7. Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all – 1 in 5 people lacks access to modern electricity; 3 billion people rely on wood, coal, charcoal or animal waste for cooking and heating; and energy is dominant contributor to climate change, accounting for 60% of total global greenhouse gas emissions.

8. Promote inclusive and sustainable economic growth, employment and decent work for all – Half of the world's population nearly 2.2 billion still lives on the equivalent of about US\$2.00 daily. Global unemployment increased from 170 million in 2007 to nearly 202 million in 2012, of which about 75 million are women and men. Poverty eradication is only possible through stable and well-paid jobs. 470 million jobs are needed globally for new entrants to the labor markets between 2016-2030.

9. Build resilient infrastructure, promote sustainable industrialization and foster innovation – the UN reports that investments in infrastructure, transport, irrigation, energy, information and communication technology are all crucial to achieving sustainable development and empowering communities. Growth in productivity and incomes, improvements in health and education rely on investment in infrastructure. Basic infrastructure such as roads, information and communication technologies, sanitation and electrical power and water are scarce in underdeveloped and developing countries. UN reports also show that 2.6 billion people lack access to basic sanitation, and approximates that 800 million people lack access to water – hundreds of them live in sub-Saharan Africa and Asia. Between 1 to 1.5 billion people do not have access to reliable phone services. Inadequate infrastructure undermines efforts at improving access to markets, training and employment opportunities, healthcare and education.

10. Reduce inequalities within and among countries – Efforts have been and continue to be made to reduce the huge world population of those living in poverty, though more still needs to be done. Nations most vulnerable to poverty include underdeveloped and the least among developing countries. Inequality still persists (in some countries this has even increased) particularly in rural areas. Economic growth does not in all cases translate to poverty reduction nor eradication if the process is not inclusive to involve sustainable economic, social and environmental development. Universal Policies must be developed and implemented to address the issue of inequality in a holistic way taking into consideration the needs of marginalized and/or disadvantaged populations, contextual and geographic settings.

The UN reports that on average, and taking into account population size, income inequality increased by 11 % in developing countries between 1990 and 2010; more than 75% of population in developing

countries are living in societies where income is more unequally distributed than it was in the 1990s; inequality harms growth and poverty reduction, the quality of relations in the public and political spheres, and individuals 'sense of fulfillment and self-worth; Income inequality cannot be effectively tackled unless the underlying inequality of opportunities is addressed.

A UNDP global survey reports that “policy makers from around the world acknowledged that inequality in their countries is generally high and potentially a threat to long-term social and economic development”. Persons with disabilities are up to five times more likely than average to incur catastrophic health expenditures, and women in rural areas are still up to three times more likely to die while giving birth than women living in urban areas.

11. Make cities inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable - Half of the world’s population totaling about 3.5 billion people lives in cities with predictions of an increase to nearly 60% by 2030. An estimated 828 million people currently live in slums and the number keeps rising; UN reports that the world’s cities occupy just 3% of the earth’s land, but account for 60-80% of energy consumption and 75% of carbon emissions, and that rapid urbanization is exerting pressure on fresh water supplies, sewage, the living environment, and public health. However, the high density of cities can bring efficiency gains and technological innovation while reducing resource and energy consumption.

12. Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns - Sustainable consumption and production promote resource and energy efficiency, sustainable infrastructure, and provide access to basic services, green and decent jobs and a better quality of life for all. The UN reports that its implementation helps to achieve overall development plans, reduce future economic, environmental and social costs, strengthen economic competitiveness and reduce poverty.

It also requires a systemic approach and cooperation among actors operating in the supply chain, from producer to final consumer. It is also reported that an estimated one third of all food produced yearly (an equivalent to 1.3 billion tons) worth around US\$1 trillion ends up spoiling due to poor transportation and harvesting practices, but if people globally switched to energy efficient light-bulbs the world would save US\$120 billion annually.

The UN predicts that should the global population reach 9.6 billion by 2050, the equivalent of almost three planets could be required to provide the natural resources needed to sustain current lifestyles. UN reports on the impact of water, energy, and food on human existence:

Water - Less than 3% of the world’s water is drinkable; Man is polluting water faster than nature can recycle and purify water in rivers and lakes; More than 1 billion people still do not have access to fresh water; Excessive use of water contributes to the global water stress; Water is free from nature but the infrastructure needed to deliver it is expensive.

Energy - Commercial and residential energy use is the second most rapidly growing area of global energy use after transport; A 32% increase in vehicle ownership is expected by 2020. Households consume 29% of global energy and consequently contribute to 21 % of resultant CO2 emissions.

Food - 1.3 billion tons of food is wasted every year while almost 1 billion people go undernourished and another 1 billion hungry; overconsumption of food is detrimental to our health and the environment. 2 billion people globally are overweight or obese; Land and marine environment degradation, declining soil fertility, unsustainable water use, and overfishing are all lessening the ability of the natural resource base to supply food. The UN reports that the food sector accounts for around 30% of the world's total energy consumption and around 22% of total Greenhouse gas emissions.

13. Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts - Climate change is affecting every country in the world today: disrupting national economies and affecting lives, currently costing people, communities and countries dearly with worse predicted for the future. People are experiencing worsening impacts of climate change including changing weather patterns, rising sea level, and more extreme weather events. The greenhouse gas emissions from human activities are driving climate change and continue to rise. Without action, the world's average surface temperature is projected to rise over the 21st century and is likely to surpass 3 degrees Celsius this century. The pace of change is quickening as more people are turning to renewable energy and other measures that will reduce emissions and increase adaptation efforts.

14. Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources

The UN reports that the oceans' temperature, chemistry, currents and life drive global systems that make the earth habitable for humankind. Rain and drinking water, weather, climate, coastlines, our food, and oxygen in the air are all ultimately provided and regulated by the sea. Oceans and seas have always been vital conduits for trade and transportation. Careful management of this essential global resource is key to assuring a sustainable future.

Oceans cover three quarters of the Earth's surface, contain 97% of earth's water, and represent 99% of the living space on the planet by volume; Globally, the market value of marine and coastal resources and industries is estimated at about 5% of global GDP; Oceans absorb about 30% of carbon dioxide produced by humans, buffering the impacts of global warming; Oceans serve as the world's largest source of protein, with more than 3 billion people depending on the oceans as their primary source of protein and food; Marine fisheries directly or indirectly employ over 200 million people; Subsidies for fishing are contributing to the rapid depletion of many fish species, and preventing efforts to save and restore global fisheries and related jobs, causing ocean fisheries to generate US\$ 50 billion less per year than they could; and 40% of the world oceans are heavily affected by human activities, including pollution, depleted fisheries, and loss of coastal habitats.

15. Sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, halt and reverse land degradation, halt biodiversity loss - Forests cover 30% of earth's surface, providing food security, shelter, combating climate change, protecting biodiversity and homes of rural population. UN reports that 13 million hectares of forests are lost every year while persistent degradation of dry-lands has led to the desertification of 3.6 billion hectares. Deforestation and desertification caused by human activities and climate change pose major challenges to sustainable development, and continue to affect livelihoods of millions of people in the fight against poverty. Efforts are being made to manage forests and combat desertification. Around 1.6 billion people depend on forests for their livelihood, and forests are home to more than 80% of all terrestrial species of animals, plants and insects.

UN also reports that 2.6 billion people depend directly on agriculture, but 52% of the land used for agriculture is affected by soil degradation; as of 2008, land degradation affected 1.5 billion people globally; due to drought and desertification yearly, 12 million hectares are lost (23 hectares per minute), where 20 million tons of grain could have been grown; 74% of the poor are directly affected by land degradation globally. Over 80% of the human diet is provided by plants. Cereal crops – rice, maize and wheat – provide 60% of energy intake; 80% of rural dwellers in developing countries rely on traditional plant-based medicines for basic healthcare: Micro-organism and invertebrates are key to ecosystem services, but their contribution are still poorly known and rarely acknowledge.

16. Promote just, peaceful and inclusive societies – this goal is dedicated to the promotion of peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, the provision of access to justice for all, and building effective, accountable institutions at all levels. Institutions most affected by corruption are the judiciary and police. Corruption, bribery, theft and tax evasion cost some US \$1.26 trillion for developing countries annually; this amount could be used to improve the lives of those living on less than \$1.25 a day for at least six years. The rate of children leaving primary school in conflict affected countries reached 50% in 2011, equaling to 28.5 million children, showing the impact of unstable societies on one of the major goals of the post 2015 agenda: education.

17. Revitalize the global partnership for sustainable development - A successful sustainable development agenda requires partnerships between governments, the private sector and civil society. These inclusive partnerships built upon principles and values, a shared vision, and shared goals that place people and the planet at the center, global, regional, national and local levels.

Urgent action is needed to mobilize, redirect and unlock the transformative power of trillions of dollars of private resources to deliver on sustainable development objectives. Long-term investments, including foreign direct investment, are needed in critical sectors, especially in developing countries. These include sustainable energy, infrastructure and transport, as well as information and communications technologies. The public sector needs to set a clear direction

to review and monitor frameworks, regulations and structures that assure that such incentives be retooled to attract investments and reinforce sustainable development.

National oversight mechanisms such as supreme audit institutions and oversight functions by legislatures should be strengthened;

- ✦ Official development assistance stood at \$135.2 billion in 2014, the highest level ever recorded;
- ✦ 79% of imports from developing countries enter developed countries duty-free;
The debt burden on developing countries remains stable at about 3 per cent of export revenue;
- ✦ The number of Internet users in Africa almost doubled in the past four years;
- ✦ 30% of the world's youth are digital natives, active online for at least five years;
- ✦ More than 4 billion people do not use the Internet, and 90% of them are from the developing world.