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news

Prez. Sirleaf Tours Caterpillar Affected Areas in Zota District, Bong County - Apologizes to residents for Government's Slow Response

(MONDAY - March 02, 2009): President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf has visited a number of towns in Zota District Bong County, recently affected by an invasion of caterpillars. During the tour of the affected areas, the President apologized to the people of Bong County for government's slowness in restoring social services following the recent caterpillar invasion. The President assured the people that she would get personally involved to ensure their basic needs are met.

According to an Executive Mansion release, the President spoke Sunday in Zota District, when she toured towns affected by the recent caterpillar invasion. Towns visited by the Liberian leader include Pelele, Naama and Shankpala, near the Liberian-Guinean border. It can be recalled that President Johnson Sirleaf sometime ago declared a state of emergency in the county due to the caterpillar invasion. During her interaction with county residents, the Liberian leader repeatedly expressed her regrets at the effects of the caterpillar invasion, but noted that she is now fully aware of the lapses and would now take control of the process to arrive at a solution.

In discussions with the President during the visit, the residents called for the restoration of pipe borne water which they said was affected by the caterpillar invasion. The residents expressed fear about their livelihood in the area and appealed to President Johnson Sirleaf for water pumps to be installed in surrounding villages.

Meanwhile, President Johnson Sirleaf has expressed sympathy to the family of a motorcyclist whose death last weekend sparked violent disturbances in Gbarnga, Bong County. During the disturbances, angry youths reportedly went on the rampage, allegedly setting ablaze the county's magisterial court and the Liberian flag. The President frowned on the lawlessness by the disgruntled youth and called for an investigation into the matter.

She reminded the youth that violence and the destruction of property affects donor's confidence, thereby creating a setback in the Government's ability to attract investors. The President was speaking Sunday at the Gbarnga City Hall, when she met with members of the Bong County Motorcyclists Union.

The Liberian leader directed the Ministry of Transport to formulate guidelines which would guide the activities of motorists. She urged the Transport Ministry to attach some urgency to the drafting of the guidelines. - The End -

Liberia: Monrovia Streets Rehabilitation Formally Launched

Monrovia — President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf has formally launched the commencement of road rehabilitation for the streets of

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Monrovia, reminding Liberians that benefits from her travels to mobilize resources are now paying off.

Speaking on February 26 at a ground breaking ceremony to commence the road projects, the President expressed appreciation to Liberia's international partners for the overwhelming response to the country's development programs. The rehabilitation of roads, the President said, is not only restricted to Monrovia but covers other parts of the country.

The Liberian leader called for patience and understanding, noting that the successful implementation of the projects will require money, skills, talent, time and cooperation.

Amid cheers by workers, the President also urged the Chinese contracting firm, CHICO, to foster strong partnership with the workers for a smooth implementation of the project. "All the workers want is to have a decent pay," the Liberian leader reminded the Chinese firm.

Also speaking at the occasion were the Minister of Public Works, Mr. Loseni Dunzo, World Bank Country Representative, Ohene Nyanin, and Chinese Ambassador Zhou Yuxiao. The men assured the Liberian leader of their cooperation in ensuring the successful implementation of the road rehabilitation project.

The rehabilitation work is expected to be completed in two years. The rehabilitation will cover all major streets in Monrovia including the Caldwell to St. Paul Bridge Road. The project, estimated at nearly USD\$16 million, is being funded by the World Bank and supervised by the Ministry of Public Works.

Meanwhile, the President has urged residents of Monrovia to support current clean-up efforts carried out by women's groups in the city. The President again reminded individuals erecting makeshift and other structures in the city that Government will enforce zoning laws. She appealed for cooperation. "We have to keep this city clean so that we all can be proud of it," President Johnson Sirleaf reminded residents as she made stops along the streets of Monrovia to thank the women and other volunteers for their hard work.

The President also toured the Jallah Town Road project which is now nearing completion.

Green Advocates-Global Witness Analyze GOL-China Union Concession Agreement

(MONROVIA-Feb. 25, 2009): President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf has welcomed comments and recommendations by two rights groups, contained in an in-depth analysis of a recently concluded Mineral Concession Agreement between the Government of Liberia and the China Union Mining Company. The President described as refreshing the observations and recommendations by the two groups, noting that terms of the agreement are a manifestation of Government's determination to ensure that Liberia reaps the maximum benefits from its natural resources.

President Johnson Sirleaf described as constructive the acknowledgment by Global Witness and Green Advocates standards being set by the Government of Liberia to highlight in concession agreements, measures which will safeguard the interest of the country and benefit the people of Liberia.

In a recent analysis of the Liberian Government-China Union concession contract, International rights group, Global Witness, and local environmental advocacy institution, Green Advocacy, observed that the contract includes positive commitments to transparency through the contractual obligation to join the Liberia Extractive Industry Transparency Initiative. The groups also welcomed terms of the agreement which call for the disclosure of information on payments to the Government and publishing of the contract. The agreement, the groups noted, also contains robust transfer pricing provisions and the Concessionaire and the Operating Company are made jointly and severally liable. These provisions, Global Witness and Green Advocates observed were notably lacking in previous concession agreements.

A campaigner for Global Witness, Natalie Ashworth said, the Liberian government should be congratulated on negotiating an Agreement which has the potential to play a very positive role in Liberia's development and which is a significant improvement on other recent natural resource concession contracts between the state and international companies. "We encourage Liberia's lawmakers now to use their voice to ensure that the final, ratified, Bong Mines contract represents the best possible deal for Liberia and its people," the Global Witness official emphasized. The Groups also lauded measures taken by Government toward

transparency in the Agreement, a principle they described as important safeguard against corruption and should be applauded. The Government, Green Advocates Executive Director Alfred Brownell noted, must now apply this kind of transparency to the way it spends and accounts for the US\$40 million signature bonus." The Executive Mansion quotes President Johnson Sirleaf as saying the signature bonus will be used for the rehabilitation and construction of roads and bridges throughout the country, in line with budgetary appropriations. Under the agreement, China Union will pay the Government of Liberia a US\$40 million up-front signature bonus.

The fact the Liberian Government has publicly announced this payment, the groups noted, is positive. The Groups pointed out that this development is contrary to what is practiced in other resource-rich countries, where signature bonuses are often kept secret, thereby raising the risks of corruption.

Despite the positive aspects of the contract, Green Advocates and Global Witness observed, the Agreement is vague in parts, potentially leaving it open to abuse. Greater clarity and rigor, the groups said, is required to prevent serious problems from arising in the future. "Weaker elements of the contract which the Legislature should consider amending are the provisions relating to the resettlement of communities, the fiscal stabilization clause and the clauses governing the feasibility study," the Advocacy Groups recommended.

"Ultimately, the contract is only as effective as its implementation. As such, it is critical that significant international support is given to develop state capacity, local civil society and legal avenues to provide the checks and balances needed to ensure oversight of the contract's execution," Green Advocates and Global Witness recommended. - The End -

President Sirleaf Reconstitutes Board of Directors

(Monrovia, Liberia, February 21, 2009): - the President has reconstituted the Board of Directors of the following Public Corporations:

Liberia Telecommunication Corporation

- 1 Musa Dean Chairman
- 2 Harwene Tyee Member
- 3 Floyd Thomas Member
- 4 Ciata Victor Member
- 5 James Cooper Member
- 6 Jemima Caulcrick Member
- 7 Managing Director Secretary

Liberia Electricity Corporation

- 1 Francis Cooper Chairman
- 2 Minister of Finance Member
- 3 Minister of Justice Member
- 4 Minister of Labor Member
- 5 Sheba Brown Member
- 6 Susannah Vaye Member
- 7 Chris Neyor Member
- 8 Aaron Mathies Member
- 9 Managing Director Secretary

National Oil Company of Liberia

- 1 Clemenceau Urey Chairman
- 2 Minister of Finance Member
- 3 Minister of Lands, Mines & Energy Member
- 4 Dee Zoe Lake Member
- 5 S. Benedict Cooper Member
- 6 Oswald Tweh Member
- 7 Frederick Bass-Golokai Member

Forestry Development Authority

- 1 Christopher Toe (Dr.) Chairman
- 2 Minister of Finance Member
- 3 Minister of Commerce Member
- 4 Minister of Internal Affairs Member
- 5 Minister of Planning & Economic Affairs Member
- 6 President of LBDI - Francis A. Dennis Member
- 7 Roland Woheel Member
- 8 Bismark Kuyon Member
- 9 Managing Director Secretary

National Housing Authority (NHA)

- 1 James Ngenda Chairman

- 2 Minister of Public Works Member
- 3 Minister of Justice Member
- 4 William D. Towah Member
- 5 Nettie Blah Member
- 6 Mustapha S. Gibson Member
- 7 Managing Director Secretary

Liberia Petroleum Refining Company

- 1 Ms. Amelia Ward Chairman
- 2 Ophelia Johnson Member
- 3 William Smith Member
- 4 Henrique Tokpa Member
- 5 David A. B. Jallah Member
- 6 Faustina Merchant Member
- 7 Theo Williams Member
- 8 Nowai Golorwulu Gbilila Member
- 9 Managing Director Secretary

Meanwhile, the President has relieved Mr. Richard Fallah of his post as Deputy Director General of the General Services Agency. Mr. Alexander Kromah has been named by the President as the new Deputy Director General of the General Services Agency. - The End -

EXECUTIVE MANSION DISPATCH - DOHA - QATAR

Doha, Qatar: Feb. 17, 2009): The fourth International conference of the Extractive Industries Initiative (EITI) has opened in the Asian Gulf State of Qatar, with Liberian President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf speaking of the importance of ensuring that resources from extractive industries are used in the interest of the people.

Delivering the keynote address Tuesday in Doha, the Liberian President reminded conference participants of Liberia's tragic past. Her administration, the President recalled inherited dysfunctional institutions and an entrenched criminalized value system, a system in which impunity had been the norm for a long period. Few years ago, the President informed conference delegates, Liberia was the epicenter of a regional war, the example of a failed state. "A nation brought to its knees, a people impoverished as a result of the misallocation and misuse of the proceeds of natural resources. International sanctions imposed to remove the source of funding for the purchase of arms that fueled regional conflict, exacerbated the deepening poverty of a people left to survive by any means possible. Rent seeking and corruption became a way of life to support conspicuous consumption at the top and a source of livelihood at the bottom," an Executive Mansion dispatch from Doha quotes the President as saying.

Despite the setback, the President Johnson Sirleaf outlined measures being instituted by Government to reverse the trend. As part of the measures, the Liberian leader noted, Government sought to settle huge salary arrears and to improve compensation levels to minimize vulnerabilities. "We established transparent budget and financial reporting processes with the Legislature and the public exercising their specific roles. We activated or strengthened the institutional pillars of integrity - the Public Procurement and Concessions Commission and the General Auditing Commission. We are in the process of completing the restructuring of the Civil Service and establishing internal auditing systems."

Among the measures, the President also noted, Government has formulated, submitted or endorsed to the national Legislature several laws to govern the behavior and action of public servants - a Code of Conduct, the Freedom of Information Act, the Corruption Offenses Act, and the Public Broadcast Act.

Despite the progress, the Liberian leader acknowledged, the challenges remain. Government's effort to punish violators of the public trust, she lamented, is hampered by a weak judicial and corrupt system. Although there have been dismissals, suspensions and exposure of violators attesting to Government's commitment to fight corruption, the President acknowledged that more timely action and hard decisions by the Executive would give stronger evidence to the commitment to zero tolerance of corrupt practices.

President Johnson Sirleaf referred to the decision by Government to activate the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative and the Public What You Pay (PWYP) Coalition, as, perhaps the most important among the actions by the Administration to fight corruption.

Liberia, the President noted, has gone beyond the required, to include forestry operations which had been the source of resource misallocation in the past.

The President spoke of the release last week of Liberia's first LEITI report which, for the first time in the nation's history, provides an open and transparent reconciliation of the records of Government

and the concerned industries, as to payments made by the industries, and that which was received and recorded in Government accounts. The report, the President said, not only gives an account of the flow of funds, but discloses certain systemic weaknesses which must be correct to ensure full compliance by the concerned industries and proper accounting of Government.

"This is not the final step of this initiative," the President emphasized. She said it is important to ensure that the resources paid to Government are properly allocated through the budgetary process to those activities that lead to economic expansion and respond to the social needs of the people. This, she pointed out will require commitment on the part of all three branches of Government.

President Johnson Sirleaf assured member countries of the EITI and conference delegates that of her Government's commitment to continuing the fight against corruption and enhancement of the processes of transparency and accountability through the Liberia Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (LEITI) and Publish What You Pay (PWYP) coalition.

Other speakers during Tuesday's formal opening session included the Deputy Prime Minister of the State of Qatar, Abdullah Bin Hamad Al-Attayah; Royal Dutch Shell, Chief Executive Officer, Jeroen van der Veer; Open Society Institute Chairman, Billionaire George Soros; and Peter Eigen, Chairman of the EITI Board. The speakers sounded the need to expand the authority of the Initiative to include more countries in the extractive Industries, to help build and strengthen the pillars of integrity and transparency. The Conference which ends Wednesday, has now enter the discussion stage with participants discussing a number of issues including a report of the EITI Board, mining and sub-regional reporting and reconciling in the framework of the EITI; national resources and development, among other issues. Signed: Cyrus Wleh Badio - Press Secretary to the President - Doha-Qatar

Liberia Government on TPS

(MONROVIA-February 11, 2009): The Liberian Government says it is in discussions with US Government officials to address the threat of deportation hanging over Liberians residing in the United States of America. Upon directives of President Johnson Sirleaf, and as a follow up on discussions last year between President Johnson Sirleaf and former US President George Bush on the issue, Liberia's ambassador to the United States, Mr. Nathaniel Barnes has continued discussions with US government officials, particularly members of the United States Congress as well as the incoming administration of President Barack Obama.

In support of the continuing discussions between Liberian and US Government officials to consider an extension in the status of Liberians legally residing in the United States, more than 30 members of the United States Congress have signed a letter, requesting the administration of President Obama for an extension of the Temporary Protective Status for Liberians or grant Deferred Enforced Departure (DED). The request which has a bipartisan support was contained in a letter dated December 19, 2008, expressing deep concern that if TPS for Liberians in the United States were terminated, the country's recovery could be damaged severely and thousands of families separated and uprooted due to forced repatriation.

The leadership of President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, the Congressional members noted, has put Liberia on a pathway to reform by rooting out corruption in the highest level of government, but pointed out, however, that the country's restoration remains a very difficult process. With high unemployment and an infrastructure that is still badly damaged, the US lawmakers argued, Liberia is in no place to welcome home its refugees. An influx of refugees the lawmakers agreed could have a destabilizing effect on the country's fledgling economic and social structures.

One of the unintended consequences of Temporary Protective Status, the lawmakers pointed out in their letter is that the designation never accounted for a protracted conflict. "Many Liberians have been living under TPS for at least 15-years and in that time, have started families, bought homes and raised American-born children. Liberian-Americans have even answered the call to serve in the United States military," the US law-makers observed.

The statement was signed by Congressmen Patrick Kennedy of Rhode Island, Jesse Jackson, Jr. of Chicago; New Jersey Congressman Donald Payne and Sheila Jackson Lee of California, among others. A similar letter was also addressed to the outgoing administration of President George W. Bush in December last year.

Liberia's Ambassador to the United States, Mr. Nathaniel Barnes, has, meanwhile, indicated that in his meetings with several congressmen concerning the matter, they have expressed their commitment to finding a solution that will address the plight of Liberians affected by the threat of deportation.

The Liberian Government, ambassador Barnes says, remains hopeful that a temporary or more permanent solution can be found to avert the threat of deportation hanging over Liberians who fall within the category. - The End -

Monrovia Gets New Mayor - As New Appointments Announced in Government

(MONROVIA-Feb. 6, 2009): President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf has made several appointments in Government, subject to confirmation by the Liberian Senate, where applicable.

Those appointed are: Madam Mary Broh, Mayor-Monrovia City Corporation; and Madam Laetitia Reeves, Mayor-Paynesville City Corporation.

Appointments have also been made at the Ministry of National Defense. Mr. Robert E. Cooper becomes the Assistant Minister for Plans, Policy & Operations while Mrs. Olga R.C.Jallah has been named Assistant Minister for Personnel Administration & Resource Management.

According to an Executive Mansion release, the President has also effected changes at the Ministry of Lands, Mines & Energy. Mr. Carlton Miller has been appointed Assistant Minister for Mineral Exploration & Research; Mr. Walter McCarthy, Assistant Minister for Mines; and Mr. James Zawolo, Assistant Minister for Energy.

Madam Florence Dukuly goes to Ministry of Internal Affairs as Assistant Minister for Administration while Mr. Ekeema A. Witherspoon becomes Assistant Minister for Technical Services also at the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Mr. Henry B. Yonton, Assistant Minister for Administration, Ministry of Planning & Economic Affairs.

President Johnson Sirleaf has also appointed Mr. Kedrick Johnson as Assistant Managing Director for Administration & Finance at the Forestry Development Authority (FDA) and Mr. Joseph Barkolleh Quelleh, District Commissioner-Zorzor District, Lofa County.

In a related development, Dr. Ivan F. Camanor has been named by the President to head the National AIDS Commission Secretariat.

Meanwhile, the President has constituted a Special Presidential Task Force on Greater Monrovia Cleaning & Urban Renewal. An Advisory Board on Inter-Ministerial Zoning Committee includes, the Minister of Public Works, Chairman; and Minister of Internal Affairs, Co-Chair. Members on the Advisory Board on Inter-Ministerial Zoning are the Ministers of Planning & Economic Affairs; Lands, Mines & Energy; Justice; as well as Information.

The Special Presidential Task Force on Greater Monrovia Cleaning & Urban Renewal is also made up of a Task Force-Technical Team to be headed by Mr. Daniel G. Johnson as Chairman. Its membership includes the Ministries of Public Works, Lands, Mines & Energy; as well as Health & Social Welfare. The Task Force-Technical Team also includes members of the Lebanese, Indian, and Fula Communities, as well as Mayors, Commissioners, and Governors within the Greater Monrovia Area, the Liberia Marketing Association and the General Services Agency. - The End -

A man who turned down a US \$20-thousand dollars in an attempted bribery has been honored in Monrovia by the Liberian Chief Executive

(MONROVIA-January 27, 2009): A Liberian civil servant who turned down a US 20-thousand dollars attempted bribe has been honored in Monrovia. Mr. Richard Karyea was among eight (8) civil servants honored Tuesday by President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf at a ceremony organized by the Civil Service Agency (CSA) of Liberia for the invaluable services they have rendered their respective ministries during the past year.

The President paid special tribute to Mr. Karyea for demonstrating a true spirit of honesty and integrity in support of Government's determination to fight corruption in all sectors. Selected by the Civil Service Agency as the 2008 Civil Servant of the Year, Mr. Karyea currently serves as Deputy Chief Examiner at the Ministry of Finance. He was singled out for recognition for his refusal to accept US \$20-thousand offered him by a drug trafficker in 2006 to facilitate the smuggling of a huge quantity of cocaine into the country. The President was full of praises for Mr. Karyea who then served as a custom officer at the Roberts International Airport. Mr.

Karyea was also presented a cash reward of US 1-thousand dollars by the President.

Paying tribute to the honorees, President Johnson Sirleaf also presented certificates to the honorees and commended them for performing their respective tasks to the best of their abilities, according to an Executive Mansion release.

Among others honored were employees of the Ministries of Finance, Labor, State for Presidential Affairs, Internal Affairs, Civil Service Agency and Commerce & Industry.

The exercise, according to Civil Service Agency Director General Dr. William Allen was designed to give recognition to the eight civil servants who had set standards in the discharge of their duties. Director Allen also praised the 2008 Civil Servant of the Year, Mr. Karyea for his honesty and commitment to duty. The Civil Servant of the Year, the CSA Director disclosed will also receive US \$1-thousand dollars. Other honorees, he said will receive US 5-hundred dollars each.

Dr. Allen said it was the Civil Service Agency's determination to make the award ceremony an annual event. The exercise he noted, would serve as a motivating factor for all civil servants. It was the first by the Civil Service Agency of Liberia.

The Civil Service Agency's National Awards program also brought together cabinet ministers, family members of the honorees and well-wishers. - The End -

President Sirleaf Signs Forestry Concession Agreements

(MONROVIA-Jan. 23, 2009): Two forestry agreements covering a total area of more than one-hundred thousand hectares have been signed by President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf. Forestry Management Contracts were awarded to two Liberian owned and operated companies, BJ&J and the Liberia Tree and Trading Company. BJ&J will harvest about 59,000 hectares in Rivercess while the Liberia Tree and Trading Company has been awarded the contract to harvest 57, 000 hectares in Rivercess.

An Executive Mansion release quotes the President as saying the exercise is in fulfillment of a promise to commence forestry activities in the country to open up more employment avenues for Liberians. The President emphasized that the resumption of activities in the forestry sector would contribute to the employment initiatives of Government and provide more income generation.

She assured residents in areas where forestry activities will be taking place that Government has put in place measures in the various agreements to ensure that residents benefit under the country's Community Forestry Law. The President said Government will ensure that companies engaging in forestry activities provide social services to communities in which they operate in keeping with their responsibilities under the new forestry laws of the country.

Under the National Forestry Reform Law, companies commercially harvesting timber are to pay 30 percent of the land rental to affected communities, while 30 percent is to be paid into the County Development Accounts of Liberia's 15 sub-political divisions. In addition, under a social agreement between companies and communities, at least one-dollar per cubic meter is to be paid by the company to the community for timber harvested in keeping with the National Forestry Reform Law.

The agreements signed Friday by the Liberian leader are estimated at an aggregate investment of USD\$20 million. Initially, more than 500 jobs are expected to be created from the concession agreements which will now be sent to the National Legislature for ratification.

Rivercess County Senator Jonathan Bannie, lauded the Liberian President for fulfilling her promise to bring Government to the people, and said the people of Rivercess were particularly grateful that their county would serve as a center for forestry activities. The activities, Senator Bannie said, would create employment opportunities and promote economic viability in the county.

The signing was witnessed by the Managing Director of the Forestry Development Authority (FDA), Mr. John Woods; Agriculture Minister, Dr. Chris Toe; National Investment Commission (NIC) Chairman, Mr. Richard Tolbert; and the Rivercess County Representative, Elizabeth Williams. - The End -

Case Dismissed Against House Speaker Alex Tyler

(MONROVIA-Jan. 23, 2009): A writ of arrest ordered by the magisterial court for Monrovia for House Speaker Alex Tyler has been ordered quashed by the court. The Executive Mansion, quoting a Justice Ministry release signed by the Minister, Cllr. Philip Banks, says on directive of the Ministry, a submission was made early Thursday in the Magisterial court for the City of Monrovia, where the writ was issued, to dismiss, deny and quash the writ. The submission, the Justice Ministry says, was granted and the writ was ordered quashed by the Court and the case dismissed.

"The Ministry of Justice has announced its astonishment and regrets at the issuance of a writ of arrest on the speaker of the House of Representatives, Honorable Alex Tyler by the Magisterial court for the City of Monrovia," the Ministry pointed out. The Justice Ministry said unequivocally in the statement, that under no circumstances is any person permitted to initiate the issuance of any writ of arrest against another person without the Justice Ministry's expressed consent.

"In order to avert the travesty of Justice and avoid the misuse of the criminal machinery to perpetrate acts of injustice by any person(s) appearing before our lower courts of first instance, such as the magisterial courts," the Justice Ministry says, it will rigidly be enforcing the pronouncements made by it that no writs of arrest are to be sought or issued, except upon a proper police charge sheet, indicating that the complaint charging the commission of a crime has been investigated and that sufficient magnitude has been found to warrant charging the accused and seeking his or her arrest.

The Ministry of Justice has further ordered that a full investigation be conducted into the matter and says that the necessary steps will be taken to ensure that there is no repetition of such incident.

The Ministry also announced that any lawyer not in its employ and who does not have or who has not been granted the expressed requisite legal authority by the Ministry of Justice to act for it or on its behalf, or to associate with it in any proceedings, civil or criminal, and who causes the issuance of any writs of arrest against any persons, a matter which is solely within the statutory prerogative of the Ministry of Justice, will be ordered arrested and prosecuted, for portraying himself or herself as being in the employ of the Ministry of Justice or as acting for an on behalf of the Ministry of Justice.

The Ministry of Justice, therefore, hopes that all persons, legal and non-legal, will be guided thereby, to avoid being arrested and prosecuted.

President Sirleaf Addresses Bar Association

(MONROVIA-Jan. 24, 2009): Members of the Liberian National Bar Association have been challenged to practice their profession in a manner that brings dignity to the profession, promote and protect the integrity of judicial proceedings and increase the confidence of the poorest of the country in the legal system. The assurance that the courts of Liberia provide justice for all without fear or sale, President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf noted, is the biggest testimony to the quality of the rule of law. According to an Executive Mansion release, the President was delivering the keynote address Friday at the installation of officers of the Liberian National Bar Association.

Speaking on the "Deficiencies of the Past, Challenges of the Present, Vision for the Future, the President recalled that in the past the country's legal and judicial system has not worked as well as all had hoped, noting that the history of the nation is tainted with many instances of abuses within the country's judicial system. Lawyers, the President noted, have not always lived up to the expectation of our society. "We must also admit that our courts on many occasions have failed in the proper and equal administration of justice; and that many times our people become frustrated and disenchanted with the process, procedures and the quality of an access to justice," the Liberian leader observed, emphasizing that Liberians can not shy away from the fact that the loss of confidence in the country's justice system has led people to resort to extra-judicial means to obtain justice.

Despite the challenges facing the country's legal system, the President said Government's commitment to and belief in the rule of law is unshakable. The Liberian leader then appealed to members of the Bar Association for their fullest cooperation and participation in the implementation of the country's Poverty Reduction Strategy, under the Governance and Rule of Law pillar. Reform and renew of the profession, the President said, may be necessary and has therefore called upon members of the Bar to review the procedures, processes and laws with the courage to correct and build a solid frame work for the continued development of the country's laws.

The President spoke of the critical role of the Bar Association in the transformation of the country's legal system in addressing the failures of the past and meeting the challenges of the future. There is a need, the Liberian leader recommended, to strengthen the country's Law School, the institution which supplies membership to the Liberia National Bar Association, judges to the courts which preside over and determine the legal destiny of the people and institutions, legal staffing for the Executive and the Legislature. "If our Law School is weak, and there are indications that it is, the system faces deep troubles and serious problems," the Chief Executive pointed out.

The President also urged the Bar to re-examine its admission policy. It may be time, the President recommended that the Bar require more pre-requisites for membership, than mere graduation from the Law School. It may be time, the President suggested that the Bar administer its own examinations to ensure that only those graduates of the Law School who are fit to enter the profession, only those that possess the requisite legal skills and the moral behavior are admitted. "If legislation is required to achieve this objective, we expect the Bar to be bold enough to sponsor such Legislation. Otherwise, our system will continue to suffer for a long period of time," the President cautioned.

The Bar, the Liberian leader also recommended, must seek to improve and upgrade its moral and ethical standards by setting new guidelines for its members, and rigidly enforcing those standards against members who violate them. The President observed that the Bar has been unable to discipline its membership who indulge, participate in or encourage unethical behavior and corrupt practices, because of the lack of such guidance.

President Johnson Sirleaf called on the Bar, particularly the newly elected officers to bring new hope to the Liberian National Bar Association, to the legal system and profession, to the courts and the entire judiciary, and the people. "We know that the road will not be easy; that regaining the public trust will be difficult, that restoring the confidence of our people in you and in the system will require tremendous sacrifice, that restoring integrity to the system and to the profession will require difficult and sometimes painful decisions against your members, that combating corruption in your midst may be a monumental task and will demand bold actions, even if hurtful. But you must take those bold steps, like never before," the President reminded the Bar and its corp of newly elected officers.

The newly-elected President, Cllr. M. Wilkins Wright, in his induction address, promised to work toward ensuring the legal profession is restored to its dignity, honor and respect. Cllr. Wright promised to ensure that the profession regains the respect of the Liberian people. He called for the collective efforts of members of the Bar to achieve the objectives his administration has set during its three-year term.

Friday's ceremony at the Temple of Justice was also intended to launch a fund drive for the construction of a national headquarters for the Association. On behalf of Government, the President pledge US\$1-hundred thousand dollars toward the project. The amount the President said would be made available through budgetary allocations.

Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary-general for the Rule of Law, Henrietta Mensah-Bonsu, inducted Cllr. M. Wilkins as President of the Association, along with Counselors Cyril Jones, Vice President; A Kanie Wesso, General Secretary; and Milton D. Taylor, Treasurer.

The occasion was also witnessed by Chief Justice, His Honor Johnnie Lewis, Associate Justices of the Supreme Court of Liberia, Government officials, legal practitioners as well as students of the Louis Arthur Grimes School of Law and other well wishers. - The End -

APPOINTMENT IN GOVERNMENT

(MONROVIA-Jan. 21, 2009): President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf has made another appointment in Government. Dr. George Gonpu, has been named Deputy Minister of Finance, pending confirmation by the Liberian senate.

In a letter addressed to Dr. Gonpu, quoted Wednesday by an Executive Mansion release, the President said, she was pleased to appoint him to serve as Deputy Minister of Finance for Budget. "I trust you will justify the confidence reposed in you and will carry out your responsibility to the credit of yourself and our country," the President urged the newly appointed Deputy Finance Minister for Budget.

Liberian Government Receives Another Major Investment

Boost - President Sirleaf signs more than 2.6 billion USD Concession Agreements

(MONROVIA-Jan. 21, 2009): Government's effort to attract more foreign investment to the country, has received a major boost with the signing of two major concession agreements. President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf Wednesday signed a Mineral Development Agreement reached between the Government of Liberia and China Union Mining Company, Ltd., for the exploration of Bong Mines. An agreement between Government and Buchanan Renewable (Monrovia) Power Inc., to supply power to Monrovia and its environs has also been signed by the President.

Speaking during the signing ceremony, President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf welcomed the conclusion of the negotiations leading to the agreement and said Government was anxious to see operations begin. The President spoke of the potential for employment in the country and lauded government's negotiating team and the two companies for compromises reached during the negotiations.

Speaking of China Union, the Liberian leader expressed the hope that the signing of the agreement will serve as a motivation to other Chinese Companies to invest in Liberia. The President lauded Chinese ambassador, Zhou Yuxiao for his input which has allowed Chinese companies to explore the private sector of the Liberian economy. Of Buchanan Renewable Power Inc., the President expressed satisfaction that the company had made good on its earlier commitment to expand its initial intent which has gone beyond shipping wood chips abroad, but chips that would be used to produce power to be used in Liberia.

An Executive Mansion release says the President praised the Canadian Firm, MacBain Foundation for supporting the project. She described the Foundation as a true partner to Liberia whose relationship is valued. The foundation is also providing support for a number of activities in the country including "Right to Play" playgrounds, training facilities for midwifery in Zwedru, Grand Gedeh County, as well as funding for the purchase of buses for the Monrovia Transit Authority. The United States based, Overseas Private Investment Corporation (OPIC), the President pointed, has also provided backing for the project. The President was excited at the opportunities the project holds for Liberian farmers, as old rubber trees are purchased and processed into wood chips while new trees are planted. "It's a win-win situation," she noted.

The end of 2010 has been set as the target date for the completion of the project to supply power to most parts of Monrovia and its environs. The 35-megawatts power project, the first of its kind in Africa' is put at US \$150-million.

The Liberian leader assured the companies of Government's support as they work towards making their work operational.

Speaking separately, officials of China-Union and Buchanan Renewable said they were pleased to invest in Liberia. They assured the President that they would honor all terms of the agreements reached with the Liberian Government. The total cost of both concession agreements, which will now be sent to the National Legislature for ratification, is put at more than 2.6 billion United States dollars.

President Johnson Sirleaf Listed among World Leaders to Meet New American President

(MONROVIA-Jan. 19, 2009): Liberia's President Ellen Johnson is among world leaders listed to meet with the new American President Barack Obama in Washington, DC, the United States. Details surrounding the President meeting between the Liberian President and President Obama are to be concluded by relevant authorities of the two countries.

The disclosure was made by Presidential spokesman, Cyrus Wleh Badio on Monday when he addressed Executive Mansion reporters at his regular weekly press briefing. Mr. Badio was responding to reporters' questions on why the Liberian President was not attending the inauguration of the new American President. Mr. Badio said the government was being represented at the inauguration by its ambassador to the United States, Mr. Nathaniel Barnes. "Due to the anticipated high turnout at the events, the Obama inaugural committee had encouraged foreign dignitaries to designate their ambassadors already in Washington to represent them at the occasion," Mr. Badio informed the Executive Mansion press corp.

"The inauguration is historic and Liberia will be ably represented, but the expected one-on-one meeting between our President and the new American President will prove much more substantive in strengthening the already strong historical ties between the two countries," Badio maintained.

Asked what United States policy toward Liberia could be under the administration of President Barak Obama, the Presidential spokesman predicted that United States policy toward Liberia will remain on track, considering the bi-partisan support Liberia continues to enjoy in the United States congress. Mr. Obama, as an influential member of the Congressional Black Caucus, Mr. Badio pointed out, is quite in tone with developments in Liberia, and is well placed to understand the progress we are making. "The new American government will be keen on supporting democracies around the world, which are committed to all the tenets of democracy including good governance and the rule of law, transparency, accountability and free speech. These are all principles the President continues to demonstrate at home and for which Liberia would remain an important candidate for America's continuous support," he maintained. Badio was, however, quick to add that despite the belief by the Liberian President that United States support to Liberia will remain on course, the new American President will first have to tackle his domestic agenda, in particular the economic slide the United States is experiencing. "Once those domestic issues have been addressed, we believe, the benefits will subsequently trickle down to the global community including Liberia," he emphasized. Badio said President Johnson Sirleaf is excited about the historic moment in Washington on Tuesday and wished the new American President well as he undertakes this Herculean task. - The End -

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