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# The New Dawn

**French Version Inside**

## TRULY INDEPENDENT

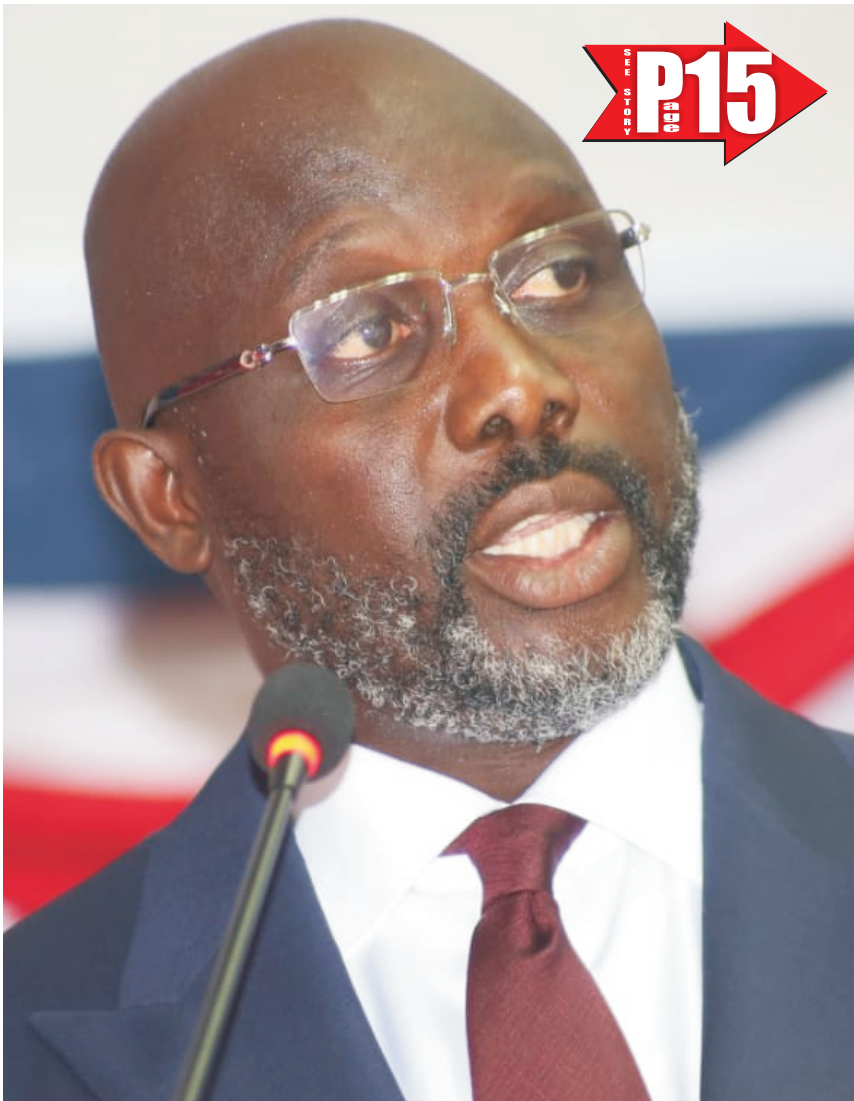
**PRES. GEORGE M. WEAH SECOND ANNUAL MESSAGE SEE PAGE 8**

**OPPOSITIONS REACT TO STATE OF THE NATION ADDRESS SEE PAGE 4**

VOL. 9 NO. 005

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# 16bn report due end of February

## -Weah says

# Waste of time



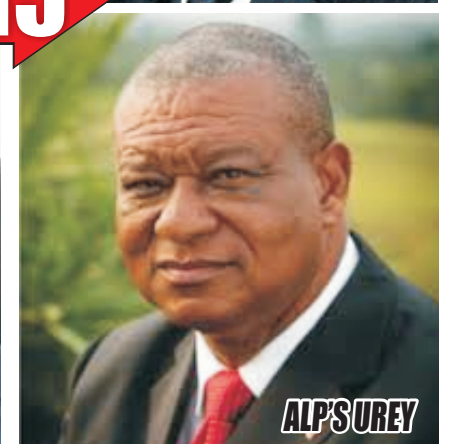
LP'S BRUMSKINE



UP'S BOAKAI



ANC'S CUMMINGS



ALP'S SUREY

## - Opposition reacts to President's Annual Message

**MORE HEADLINE NEWS**

**MORE HEADLINE NEWS**

# Weah ignores War Crimes Court

By Winston W. Parley

President George Manneh Weah has ignored a call by Liberians to establish a War and Economic Crimes Court to hold war criminals accountable for crimes committed during the country's years of civil conflict.

Delivering his second State of the Nation Address before the Legislature on Monday, 28 January, President Weah simply sounded a warning that peace in Liberia is still fragile and its sustainability is the responsibility of Liberians.

"The peace that we enjoy today was bestowed upon us with the blood and resources of other countries; its sustainability is now our responsibility. We are constitutionally responsible under the law to protect our



President George Manneh Weah

hard-won peace," President Weah says.

His regime is not in support of the establishment of a War

and Economic Crimes Court, with arguments that it is not timely for such a court.

Liberia's civil war ended in

2003 after former President Charles Ghankay Taylor was forced to leave office under pressure of rebel fighters.

One of the key elements that led a brutal rebel faction to end the late President Samuel Doe's regime, now Nimba County Sen. Prince Yormie Johnson is equally against the establishment of a war crimes court.

Johnson supported Mr. Weah's presidential bid in 2017 against incumbent Vice President Joseph Nyumah Boakai.

The civil war which lasted for over a decade resulted in the killings of more than 250,000 people, displaced millions and caused the destruction of properties in tune of millions of dollars.

Sitting President Doe was brutally killed in the process, and many survivors of these casualties are seeking justice today.

In his quest to downplay the discussion for War Crimes

Court, President Weah reiterates to Liberians what he said earlier at the United Nation General Assembly last year that a nation which has experienced civil war must never take peace for granted, or forget the long shadow that years of conflict still cast over people's lives.

"We must realize and appreciate that ours is still a fragile peace," he warns.

He says as Liberians strive to reconcile and consolidate all of their resources toward a future of prosperity, "we must uphold the rule of law to enable us forge a sustainable peace."

President Weah notes that the Ministry of National Defense continues to ensure professional military training of soldiers and it is working with international partners in restructuring a credible defense sector that would maintain the peace and provide enabling environment for the implementation of the pro-poor agenda for prosperity and development. *-Editing by Othello B. Garblah*

## DEA, EPS, NSA overlap functions

### -Customs Broker Association alarms

By Thomas Domah/Nimba

The President of the National Customs Broker Association of Liberia [NCBAL] accuses several national security agencies of overlapping functions at various border entry points across the country.

Mr. Ivan Tumbey specifically names the Executive Protection Service [EPS], the Liberia Drugs Enforcement Agency [LDEA] and the

during observance of the 67th International Customs Day held in Ganta, Nimba County under the theme, "Smart Borders for Seamless Trade, Travel and Transport."

When contacted, representatives of the security agencies accused, declined to comment.

The celebration brought together customs officers from across the country, including their counterparts from neighboring Guinea.

trade and ensure simplification, standardization and harmonization of border procedures.

He says to do so requires coordination in border management and collaboration with the private sector in the framework of customs-trade partnership.

According to Mr. Tumbey, smart border is a call to duty for customs administration to partner with other government agencies and economic operators from the private sector in pursuing the common objective of enhancing supply-chain security and efficiency based on mutual trust and transparency.

He reveals the customs department of the Liberia Revenue Authority has already introduced a compliant trade program for over 30 businesses in the country, while LRA Commissioner General, Thomas Doe Nah, has embarked on a mission to building mutual trust and transparency between trade and customs in the framework of authorized economic operators.

He adds the LRA under the administration of CG Nah has begun to champion a new security program in capacity building to effectively combat smuggling, commercial fraud and illicit trade.

In remarks, Commissioner General Thomas Doe Nah urged employees of the LRA not to see their work as an opportunity enrich themselves overnight.

He also admonishes them to stop compromising their duties



Some customs officers at the program

National Security Agency [NSA], among others for doing the work of costumes brokers.

According to him, these agencies on a daily basis are seen around border points, interfering in the works of customs brokers.

Mr. Tumbey calls on these security agencies to allow customs workers to do their work freely without interference.

He made the accusation

They were joined by officers from the Liberia Immigration Service, the Liberia National Police, the Liberia Drugs Enforcement Agency and the National Fire Service in a street parade in the principle streets of Ganta, Nimba County.

The NCBAL President notes that the effective operation of smart border requires cooperation of other agencies in the country to facilitate

## Ratify tuition-freed college education

President George Manneh Weah is urging members of the 54th Legislature to ratify his tuition-freed education program announced late last year for undergraduates in all public Universities and colleges across the country.

President Weah has come under increased criticism here since he announced the policy with pundits wondering where would the government source funding to support such ambitious program outside the national budget, given the current dismal state of the economy.

However, delivering his 2nd Annual Message on Monday, 28 January before members of the 54th Legislature sitting in joint session in the Rotunda of the Capitol, the President reiterates his government's commitment to improving the educational sector, and reports that in his first year in office, government paid WASSCE fees for 33,937 Twelfth Graders at the cost of US\$2.3 million and 41.5 million Liberian Dollars for 17,675 Ninth Graders, respectively across the country.

This was in addition to 100 scholarships awarded to the

best performing students from the 2017 West African Senior School Certificate Examinations, according to President Weah.

He says immediately after his ascendency, the government thru the Ministry of Education embarked on a nationwide tour to assess the huge challenges facing the nation's educational system, which was followed by a national education conference where stakeholders dialogued on the way forward.

He discloses that out of a total 3,754 public school teachers on supplementary payroll, government has regularized the status of 1100 teachers.

President Weah continues that during the period under review, the government received strong support from various partners, including US\$25 million from the World Bank to provide Science laboratories in public schools, US\$11.1 million from Global Partnership for educational programs in six counties, and EU's 20million Euros for technical and vocational education, respectively, among others.

due to influences from government officials and other agencies. *-Editing by*

*Jonathan Browne*

# EDITORIAL

## KLM shouldn't have left Liberia

THOUGH OFFICIALS AT the Liberia Airport Authority are yet to comment on circumstances that may have led to breakdown in negotiation with the Dutch Airline, KLM and its subsequent pull out here, we think the pull out is a missed opportunity. The airline shouldn't have left the country in the first place.

WHATEVER OFFER AND demand the Liberian government might have brought on the table, we think there should have been enough room for flexibility, because KLM, like DELTA and other western airlines had been long time partners of Liberia.

THIS PAPER GATHERED that KLM pulled out as a result of disagreement on landing fees being charged per flight. The Government of Liberia reportedly increased fare to boost revenue with the Liberia Revenue Authority or LRA requesting 10 percent on every air ticket sold, and 4.0 going to the LAA Management.

TRUTH OF THE matter is, taxes in Liberia are very high compared with neighboring countries. Perhaps even worse, Liberia lost the air traffic market as a result of 14 years of bloody civil war that grounded all economic activities, and diverted most business activities to neighboring countries.

MORE THAN A decade after restoration of peace and democratic governance, the nation's air transport services - both local and international are yet to regain pre-war status, let alone modernize to get on par with its neighbors.

RIGHT NEXT DOOR in Guinea, air transport service is 24/7, not to talk about Ghana or Ivory Coast. Liberia's Roberts International Airport is still struggling to facelift, thanks to the People's Republic of China, which is constructing a modern terminal.

EVEN UP TO now, an aerial view of the RIA, especially when landing here does not present an atmosphere of hope for a country that has enjoyed relative peace and stability in more than a decade, which should indicate that we need support of all well-intentioned business partners on our way to national recovery, development and economic growth.

LEST WE FORGET, the air transport industry is very crucial in revising our economy, because it provides the gateway to not only interacting with friends from abroad, but availing this country's rich natural resources to the outside world for investment opportunities.

AND SO, WE believe very strongly that nothing whatsoever should be done to disengage with potential investors such as KLM and others, for we need them in achieving the government's much heralded Pro-Poor Agenda for Prosperity and Development. We can't achieve the PAPD along as a government.

CONSEQUENTLY, WE SEE the sudden departure of KLM airline as a serious missed opportunity to boost our air transport industry, which has never recovered fully in terms of number of airlines flying here since the end of hostility and restore of democratic governance. Currently with only Kenya Airway, Royal Air Morac and Air Brussels connecting Liberia to Europe and the rest of the world, we need more partners such as KLM that had been in the country before. The government should not tax this sector out of existence.

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# COMMENTARY

By Sigmar Gabriel

## Franco-German Friendship Is Not Enough

*By signing the Treaty of Aachen, German Chancellor Angela Merkel and French President Emmanuel Macron have taken an important step toward firming up the Franco-German partnership at the heart of the European project. But insofar as the pact excludes all other EU member states, it risks deepening Europe's divisions even further.*

**B**ERLIN - The recent signing of the Treaty of Aachen invites us to reflect on how the Franco-German partnership's role in Europe has evolved since the two countries first adopted a bilateral friendship pact, the Élysée Treaty, in 1963.

At the heart of the Treaty of Aachen is a plan to form a European Defense Union. This is not a new idea. Similar proposals were discussed as far back as 1950, when the United States was being drawn into the Korean War. The US called for West Germany to be brought into the fold of a new European Defense Community. But in 1954, the formation of a defense union - under the Pleven Plan and the Treaty of Paris - was rejected by the French Parliament, which feared becoming too dependent on the US.

Still, during the negotiations over the Élysée Treaty less than a decade later, French President Charles de Gaulle saw an opportunity to push for more Western European independence from the US. Hence, the original text of the treaty made no mention of France or Germany's relationship to the US, the United Kingdom, NATO, or any other important international agreements. But this omission did not go unnoticed. Bowing to pressure from President John F. Kennedy, the German Bundestag added a preamble calling on France and Germany to cooperate closely with the US and the UK.

This new language frustrated de Gaulle's plans for establishing a Western European counterweight to the US, and ultimately led to discord between France and Germany. According to de Gaulle's confidant Alain Peyrefitte, the French president complained that the Germans were "behaving like pigs. They fully subject themselves to US power. They betray the spirit of the Franco-German Treaty. And they betray Europe." Later, de Gaulle would describe Germany's behavior during this episode as his "biggest disappointment."

The concept of European "strategic autonomy" was an essential component of Gaullism. Today, it features heavily in debates about European integration, and it is central to French President Emmanuel Macron's own vision for EU reform. France's goal today is the same as it was back in the 1960s, when it first acquired nuclear weapons: to free Germany and the European Union from America's overwhelming influence.

In the intervening decades, the seeds of Gaullist mistrust toward the Germans have been covered up by celebrating the Élysée Treaty. That pact had achieved the seemingly unattainable: friendship with the Erbfeind - the hereditary enemy - just a few years after the two countries had engaged in the most savage war mankind has ever known.

As a follow-up to the Élysée Treaty, the Treaty of Aachen can be touted as a symbol of Franco-German friendship. But Germans should not overlook the fact that both agreements enshrine a political strategy that is at odds with Germany's own longstanding approach of balancing the friendship with France alongside strong transatlantic relations with the US and the UK.

This is not to suggest that the two Franco-German

friendship agreements are worthless. But by putting too much store in the idealistic notion that "we can do it, together," France and Germany could find that they have achieved a Pyrrhic victory for the European project.

After all, there is reason to worry about how the new agreement will be perceived in other European capitals. Any Pole, Italian, Greek, Swiss, or Spanish citizen who reads the text might find it strange that the two European poster children of multilateralism would sign a bilateral deal, excluding everyone else. What ever happened to the principle of sovereignty and equality among all EU member states?

Moreover, France and Germany view the world differently. Whereas integration into the Western liberal order is enshrined in the German constitution (Grundgesetz), French foreign policy is guided by the country's national interests at any given time. The Treaty of Aachen, like its precursor, obscures these different outlooks with a fog of good intentions.

The Élysée Treaty symbolized the end of enmity between Germany and France. But with the Treaty of Aachen, the two countries have gone beyond that. Their stated intention now is to prevent the internal splintering of the EU.

To be sure, there are deepening divisions over matters of finance and economic policymaking between north and south (and also between France and Germany). Western member states are worried about the rule of law in eastern member states, and those in the northwest want to tackle corruption, organized crime, and weak governance in the southeast. Yet it is precisely on these EU-wide challenges that the Treaty of Aachen lacks specificity.

Though the European project no doubt depends on France and Germany, that does not mean that they alone can preserve it. Without an approach that is more sensitive to their European partners, the two countries risk giving the impression that mere obedience to the Franco-German axis is all that is expected or required.

But France and Germany have distinct interests. While Germany would fully support a reversal of Brexit in order to preserve the EU's internal balance, France might see in Britain's withdrawal an opportunity to increase its own relative political, economic, and military clout within the bloc. Never mind that a more "French Europe" without the UK would be weaker on the world stage. Even with two countries wielding nuclear arsenals, the EU is already considered by other powers to be politically irrelevant.

In a world of geopolitical carnivores, we Europeans are the last vegetarians. Without the UK, we will become vegans, and possibly prey. What really matters, then, is not "strategic autonomy" but the preservation of European sovereignty in a rapidly changing international context. France and Germany must both commit themselves to achieving that objective. The Franco-German friendship is necessary for Europe; but it will not suffice to guarantee our place in the world.

# JOINT RESPONSE OF ALL LIBERIAN PARTY (ALP), ALTERNATIVE NATIONAL CONGRESS (ANC), LIBERTY PARTY (LP) AND THE UNITY PARTY (UP) TO PRESIDENT GEORGE WEAH'S JANUARY 28, 2019 ANNUAL MESSAGE

## INTRODUCTION

Fellow Liberians:

For over one year, we have endured tremendous hardships imposed on you by what is evidently one of the worst governments on the Planet. We thank GOD ALMIGHTY for HIS providence and leading, and for preventing Liberia from sliding right back into violence despite provocation from fanatics and diehards of the ruling Coalition for Democratic Change (CDC). We also extend thanks and appreciation to our international partners and friendly governments for their continual contributions to the peace we all enjoy.

Fellow Liberians, we just listened to President George Weah's Annual Message presented to the Legislature as mandated by Article 58 of the 1986 Constitution. As expected, he failed yet again to assure us that he is committed to serving as president for all. On January 22, 2018, President Weah pledged "to end corruption, be president for all Liberians", and change the unacceptable trend of Liberians being "spectators in their own economy". What you have endured in the last year is contrary to the pledge made on January 22, 2018.

From all indications, not only are Liberians spectators in their own economy but they are now also effectively bystanders in the affairs of their own country. The president, his cronies and a handful of foreigners are the main actors and participants in the Liberian economy. And even more appalling is that some of his foreign "business" partners have horrible criminal past in their countries.

Public corruption has galloped out of control. Governance is characterized by skullduggery, bigotry, hypocrisy, falsehood, abuse and misuse of public office and power. Violation of the Constitution and laws of Liberia has become commonplace and is pervasive throughout the administration. The president and his officials are above reproach, violating laws and tearing down systems and procedures with impunity.

Despite his declaration in early 2018 that he inherited an "empty" treasury, a claim later refuted by his predecessor, Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, President Weah and his officials have only worsened Liberia's woes. Daylight robbery motivated by insatiable greed is on the rampage. This has caused a total loss of confidence and trust in the governance system.

Liberia is now a society Balkanized into those "for" and "against" George Weah. Those perceived to be against Weah are viewed by senior members of the administration as "enemies of the state". But in his message today, the president ignored the deepening division that he has caused in the country. His message showed no indication that his administration was committed to reconciling Liberia. Nevertheless, the president tried to deceive the world that Liberia is either still the country it was when he assumed office more than one year ago.

## THE ECONOMY

The President's message today portrayed Liberia, a country whose economy is already in free fall, as being "better". Obviously, he just does not care about how many of you sleep hungry, how many Liberians are barely surviving, and how grim the prospects are for this economy to recover in the foreseeable future.

The president and his officials have destroyed whatever was left of the economy after the Ebola crisis. Yet, while you waited to hear some meaningful policy prescriptions for resuscitating the bleeding economy, he said nothing substantive to rekindle our hopes, reassure businesses, ensure investor's confidence, and once more regain the respect of Liberia's bilateral and multilateral partners. This is what a serious leader would do in difficult times.

With this attitude and posture, it is easy to predict that the Liberian economy will deteriorate further. This is worrisome. The country needs an immediate remedy. The administration does not seem to have the slightest idea of what to do in order to alleviate the suffering and hardships they have imposed on you within one year, which will only continue to intensify. The president's message to the nation today was a waste of time because it failed to even hint at any concrete solution.

Our economy is declining exponentially. It is time to act. Otherwise, Liberia could be doomed forever. Today's message has heightened fears and dampened whatever tinge of hope was left as you waited to hear any practical policy prescriptions on how to revamp the economic, return to good governance and avert further financial disasters that still lie ahead. We must act with some urgency to prevent the situation from degenerating into a humanitarian catastrophe. This has validated previous doubts about his capacity to. We do not think you should continue to take him seriously at all. The president failed to assuage Liberians.

The president and his cronies are celebrating while businesses are closing down, food prices are soaring and the prospects of jobs for young people graduating from colleges and universities grow dimmer, gloomier and grimmer.

Meanwhile, sick people are being turned away by hospitals and clinics and left to die at home because there are no medicines and such basic pieces of equipment as syringes. This is not a creation of the Opposition. We are not the one destroying the Liberian economy. Liberians know who is destroying this country in a manner never experienced since the civil war ended.

You do not (and will never) matter to them at all. They announced a tuition-free policy for all public universities and colleges, but visit our public institutions and community colleges across the country. They are no basic instructional materials. Because the administration has no moral compunction, it does not care about your plight. He failed disastrously to soothe a hungry population, needless to say assure or reassure you. He presented no panacea for salvaging this economy, and gave no clear direction on where the nation is headed. Simply put, what the president just delivered is an Annual Mess-Age; it lacks substance and this is not what the constitution prescribes.

Also, we have learned from very credible sources within the administration that Humming Bird is about to be awarded a Mineral Development Agreement (MDA). We are aware that the deal being proposed for this MDA will be injurious to the Liberian interest. In the wake of recent fraudulent loan deals that, we are urging both the Executive and Legislative Branches to cancel as it makes no economic sense for the Legislature to entertain such a deal.

Plans by the Central Bank of Liberia (CBL) to seek authorization from the Legislature for the printing of additional Liberian banknotes amid the unresolved controversies surrounding the mysterious disappearance of about L\$16bn are counterproductive and will only worsen an already difficult monetary situation.

We urge the Legislature not to grant this authorization for reasons they already know.

## INCREASING LEVELS OF CORRUPTION

Fellow Liberians, you waited in vain for detailed explanation from the president on how the administration "infused" US\$25m into the economy in response to last year's monetary crisis. There is no trace of how US\$17m of this amount it was used. For the first time since Liberia returned to democratic governance, we have a president whose finance minister does not

prepare quarterly or mid-term reports as required by Law, the 2018/19 budget being a classic example. Instead, the finance minister is like a parrot perched on the branch of an oak tree programmed to make noise. That is not the function of a finance minister.

The president needed to provide satisfactory answers for questions surrounding the L\$16bn (some say L\$15bn, L\$10.5bn) reported by his own Ministers of Justice and Information, Cultural Affairs and Tourism to have gone "missing" last year. The message today provided no such answers other than what the nation has already heard.

He could not speak to these issues because of a previous position he had taken on this grave matter. Where is the report from the investigation commissioned by the president? We are shocked that the biggest scandal that has plagued this government will be addressed by two lines in the president's message. What and irony!!! It looks like the nation should brace itself for many more millions, if not billions, to go "missing" without trace before the president leaves office.

We do not understand why the Legislature, a separate branch, has not shown interest in the grave issues that confront Liberia today.

We urge the 54th Legislature to immediately proceed to cancel the fraudulent EBOMAF, ETON and other dubious deals that have impugned on our nation's reputation. More specifically, we encourage all opposition representatives and senators to demonstrate patriotism by pushing for cancellation of these and other criminal deals.

The vast majority of Liberians hate corruption, but the president has gowned and given it a top seat within his administration.

What did Weah say about it today? Nothing concrete at all because he lacks the moral rectitude to even mention it.

Do not take this year's message seriously. Insofar as the president did not address your needs, concerns and the pains that you endure daily, his message lacks credibility. Remember that as you struggle to endure hardships imposed by bad governance fueled primarily by an unprecedented level of corruption, President Weah and his officials are busy enriching themselves. They are doing so at your expense. See what they have acquired for themselves in just one year despite the economy being in such a horrible state.

Besides, what you just heard from the president falls far short of fulfilling the requirements stipulated in the Liberian Constitution. It answers no questions about how his administration intends to tackle corruption. It fails to speak directly to the fiscal indiscipline and other myriad of financial improprieties that the president and his administration have caused in just one year.

Even the Public Financial Management (PFM) and Budget Laws are violated with impunity. The president and his team do not believe in accountability and transparency. This is one way they can fund their meaningless globe-trotting adventures.

They are wastefully spending your money. At the same time, they profess to be "working for you" or "in your interest". This is false! They are serving their own selfish interests. That is why they ignore your views and are trying to suppress dissent with acts of violence. They want you to cheer for them as they loot.

You are probably unaware that the administration has acquired a private aircraft to facilitate the president's foreign travels. The same president who had lied that he "inherited an empty treasury" is the one flying in a private aircraft procured with your money. That aircraft is kept abroad to avoid any possible public backlash. They want you to believe the aircraft belongs to a "friend".

This is false! There is no wealthy person anywhere in the world to be so "generous" as to allow the leader of any nation use their aircraft for every travel. Who bears the cost of maintaining such an aircraft? The president may be thinking that you have no way of determining if the aircraft he flies in regularly was purchased last year. That was part of the criminal loan deals that the president struck last year against growing public outcries.

Besides, it makes no financial sense for George Weah to pretend to have "reduced" the salaries of public officials under the guise of instituting austerity measures while at the same time he has increased non-program expenditure by more than tenfold. This is criminal.

Also, the president tried to divert your attention from the alarming pace at which he and his officials have been accumulating real properties. This is in flagrant violation of the Liberian constitution and laws. This is the same president who declared before a US court prior to the 2017 elections that he was insolvent.

He pleaded to pay US\$160 a month for child support. In a single year, however, he has undertaken enormous private building projects for himself.

As he does this, prices of commodities have gone through the roof. The Liberian economy is bleeding profusely. There are no recovery efforts in sight. Where is the president getting the millions from to fund his private ventures? As expected, today's message avoided this question.

Urgent actions need to be taken to curtail the unending wave of corruption and bring to bear the full weight of the law on those culpable of looting state resources at the detriment of the people and the country.

## VIOLATIONS OF THE CONSTITUTION & LAWS; NATIONAL SECURITY; GOVERNANCE AND RECONCILIATION

The first year having been a disaster, most Liberians expected the president to apologize for the countless laws and provisions of the constitution that he and his officials have already breached since January 2018. Even though these violations are grave and warrant impeachment proceedings too, he does not care. He has no interest in promoting the rule of law and good governance during his tenure. This is an assault on our democracy.

You waited for one year for the president to speak to issues of concern to you. You expected to hear his position on the frequent attacks on the fundamental freedoms and rights guaranteed by the Liberian Constitution but which are today violated with impunity.

Liberians are today denied their basic rights, which include the right to life, freedom of speech, freedom of press and expression, academic freedom, freedom of assembly, freedom of religion and the pursuit of happiness.

These rights and principles form the basis of our national policies and are no gift from any president. They are immutable. Their implementation or enforcement does not depend on whether or not a president deems it necessary. President Weah has no choice but to show respect for them and ensure their unhindered implementation or enforcement.

For those Liberians who might have anticipated genuine transformation during this era, events of the past one year are sufficient to make you rethink. You need a rude awakening. You need to realize that our governance system has now reached crisis level.

... Cont'd from page 4 **JOINT RESPONSE**

Our response and the calls we are making for quick action have absolutely nothing to do with partisan politics. This is not an opposition affair. We are talking about Liberia's eternal survival. We are talking about the artificial hardships that you face daily while the president and his officials steal your resources for themselves. In fact, this is a "Rescue Liberia" mission! It is not about the regular CDC versus the Opposition. This is not the Liberia that even you in the CDC had expected to see under George Weah.

No, this is not about who has the capacity or muscles to unleash yet another round of violence. No, it is certainly not about violence. We are not talking here about encouraging, condoning and/or tolerating acts of violence. We detest violence against peaceful citizens and even violence against law-enforcement personnel. What we need is to restore sanity and decency.

But we know that when people feel directly threatened, they may be constrained to react in self-defense. If they have reason to believe that the Liberian National Police has been compromised and cannot guarantee their safety, they could react violently. The leadership of the LNP must choose between loyalty to the Liberian State and partisan allegiance to any group or political class. They must demonstrate that they have not been given any strict order to stand by as critics of the administration are physically attacked. The LNP leadership must be reminded again that the day of reckoning will surely come. When that day comes, they will account for their actions or inactions. In due course, you could be prosecuted.

Attacks against innocent citizens have become a routine. The continuous silence means tacit approval and complicity. This is a threat to peace. Soon the situation could spiral out of control.

Should the situation escalate before the president can show concern? When will he become the president that he swore to be? Who should answer these questions for him? He said nothing about this today.

Last year's violence against the residents of Montserrado County's District #13 during a by-election was not mentioned today. In that by-election, marauding bands of thugs brandishing deadly weapons disrupted a peaceful rally organized in support of Candidate Cornelia Kruah-Togba. That incident left many innocent citizens wounded. Even though the president was in the district campaigning for his party's candidate when the attack took place, he ignored it.

So, it doesn't matter to this president if scores of Liberians perished under his watch. As long as that is done in his name and against critics and political opponents, it does not matter. He will never bother to speak about it. He won't as long as it does not serve his purpose. He has relegated the presidency to being an instrument for pursuing his narrow interests.

While the president was busy rehearsing his Annual Mess-Age, the nation woke up to reports of violence in the premises of a high school where Representative Yekeh Kolubah was hosting an event for children in his district. That event was violently disrupted by thugs led by an assistant minister. Even though many of the children were seriously wounded, that assistant minister is being celebrated by the administration. He is a free man while parents are struggling to pay the medical costs for children wounded by his action.

Representative Kolubah himself later informed Liberians and the world that his residence had come under gunfire during the early hours of January 21, 2019. According to him, the Liberian National Police simply stood by. In a country that had undergone nearly two decades of institutionalized mayhem, this is worrisome.

Yet, today's message was not to address an issue as grave and life-threatening as this and other acts of violence. You probably expected that a reasonable reaction from any serious leader would have been to apologize to parents whose kids were wounded as a result of that assistant minister's barbarity and bring that idiot to face the full weight of the law. This was never done. What the president presented today was a compilation far removed from the harsh reality that you face. What he said today was simple. "You can cry and cry and cry and cry, but you will eventually get exhausted and capitulate to my whims and caprices. So, it is up to you". This is further evidence of arrogance and callous insensitivity.

For one year, this has been the hallmark of his administration. It shows that his administration will continue to downplay your pains and plight. This spells danger for Liberia. Such attitude is reminiscent of the days of anarchy. This is why we must put aside our ego, sectional, tribal, partisan and other parochial interests to unite in one accord. We must insist on an immediate and unconditional return to the rule of law. We cannot detour to lawlessness.

Look at how Liberia is gliding toward lawlessness under this president's watch. This is happening under someone who served as UNICEF Ambassador for Peace, Chairman of a Peace and Reconciliation Committee. Is he serious about administering the affairs of Liberia? Should we all sit supinely and allow the president to proceed as he is doing and yet expect any different outcome in 2019 and beyond? We need to act before it is too late.

We must however act within the limits of the Constitution and Laws of Liberia. Under our constitution, citizens can act if their happiness is threatened. Liberia's survival is under direct threat from this Government. This is the reality we face. For the first time in nearly fifteen (15) years, the culture of impunity is posing a more direct and serious threat to our peace. So, Liberians must stand together now!

We need unity in voice, purpose and action. Self should step aside. Now that you know who your new oppressors are, it is time to unite behind the "Voice of Reason". Let us make the president and his administration do what is constitutional, legal, right, fair and just. They cannot continue as they did for one year. We need to save Liberia from greed.

You can work to preserve Liberia's peace. You can help to restore the country's dignity and raise your self-esteem again. We need to restore confidence and trust in our governance system.

In fact, governance must be about Liberians. Your happiness and satisfaction, as provided under our constitution, must be stressed every step of the way. No president should be allowed to undermine this.

We must never forget that more than 200,000 of our fellow citizens were slaughtered for the peace and democracy that the president and his administration are taking for granted. The human sacrifice was enormous. We have journeyed too far to be pulled back. It does not matter who is at the helm of political power in Liberia. Let wrongs be recognized as wrongs. They never mutate. Only the perpetrators change from time to time.

Additionally, there has to be an immediate end to the deliberate destruction of integrity systems and institutions. These integrity systems were designed to improve governance. They are the only civilized way whereby we can hold public officials accountable. Through these means, we had regained our reputation as a respectable member within the comity of nations. Yet, within a single year, that reputation has vanished! Liberia has once more become an example of a country with bad governance.

The president does not honor our commitment under the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (EITI). Procedures, laws and systems for Public Procurement and Concession have been breached. His refusal last year to declare his assets was to pave the way for his personal projects and private financial ventures.

If we do not take actions together to stop the waves of violations, the ultimate negative effect will be anarchy. Obviously, no Liberian wants anarchy. The president and his officials may be

the only exception because they are the perpetrators.

Meanwhile, a campaign of witch hunt against critics and political opponents is underway at the all levels. Civil servants perceived to be "against Weah" are intimidated and dismissed. This is a grave situation. In a country wherein Government remains the biggest employer, the president does not care if many Liberians are dismissed to make way for his fanatics. You can now understand why he won't say anything about violence against critics and opponents. It benefits him.

These are crimes against humanity that shall never go unpunished. It does not matter how long it takes. It is foolhardy for anyone to think that this administration can suppress dissent by intimidating critics and opponents. Maybe they have forgotten that every single act of lawlessness and violence perpetrated strengthens our resolve. It is helping to intensify the ongoing battle for the soul of Liberia.

Why was a National Population and Housing Census not held in 2018 (ten years after 2008) as provided by the 1986 Constitution of Liberia? Obviously, funding cannot be the excuse for an administration that spent more than US\$1m to facilitate the president's travels in one year, and is likely to spend at least US\$10m on the president's travels in six years. The refusal to organize a national census is a violation of the 1986 Liberian constitution. We will challenge any attempt to organize it this year.

Also, while the Legislature was on recess last year, the president appointed and commissioned George S. S. Patten, Sr. as Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary to the United States of America and Canada. This is in flagrant violation of the Liberian Constitution. We therefore call on the Liberian Senate to insist on Mr. Patten's immediate recall.

The situation in the country is troubling. The 54th Legislature should disprove growing suspicion among Liberians that it has now become an auxiliary organ of the presidency. The serious and decent members of this Branch need to promptly investigate all acts of violence and the many grave issues confronting the country but which the Executive Branch is downplaying. The 54th Legislature cannot join the president's cheering squads. As we say here in Liberia, "Small shame is better than big shame". So, you can redeem your image now! The culture of impunity must stop now! This must stop before the 2020 senatorial election! Liberians have already suffered too much from violence and can tolerate it no further. Violence, as history has shown, will only beget violence. You must join us to save Liberia from its new predators.

We thank those senators and representatives who have distinguished themselves so far. Continue to stand up for Liberia. You are not alone in this fight. The Legislature should not be seen as abdicating its constitutional duty to the Executive Branch. There must be respect for the principle of separation of powers as enshrined in the 1986 Liberian Constitution. You cannot continue to allow the president to be above reproach.

In recent times there have been countless reports in both the local and international media about cyber violations. Even the British Government has prosecuted and convicted a hacker who was reported to have infiltrated Liberia's GSM system.

It is strange that the Government of Liberia has remained mute on this development, which raises further questions and doubts not only about its commitment to growing the economy and protecting Liberia's interest, but also the security of the nation.

We therefore call for an investigation into this situation insofar as it will reaffirm Liberia's commitment under the International Telecommunications Union.

Fellow Liberians, you will note that President Weah made no mention of serious governance and other structural reforms in government. He was more concerned with seeking to repeal Laws that grant tenured positions to institutions of government that should promote good governance and integrity in the public service. Towards this end, we the four Collaborating Political Parties commit to mount pressure on the government and constructively engage our foreign partners to help institute the necessary reforms in our Electoral System to ensure Free, Fair and Transparent elections in 2020, 2023 and onward.

#### SEPARATION OF RELIGION AND STATE

Last week the president and his officials celebrated one year in office. What were they celebrating? They were celebrating their successful looting of Liberia. They celebrated their unlawful acquisition of properties at your expense. Indeed, they had to celebrate.

They celebrated your suffering. They are glad that you are enduring excruciating hardships while they enjoy your resources.

They celebrated the violence that their thugs and fanatics unleash against innocent citizens, which is now a routine. They will continue to celebrate a further dismemberment of the economy. They have nothing to offer you. They do not care if your children drop out of school because you cannot afford to pay their fees. They do not care if hospitals and clinics are empty of medicines and have therefore become temporary funeral homes rather than being treatment centers. They just do not and will not care.

While they were celebrating their looting of Liberia in disregard for the sufferings you have endured under his watch, one of the president's spiritual advisors chose to insult your intelligence and abuse the moral sanctity of the nation. There are many genuine Christian preachers. They are on bended knees praying for Liberia. The Liberian clergy has always spoken out against societal ills. We value their courage to stand for the truth and with the suffering masses, as the Bible demands of them.

Religious leaders of every faith have never at any time forsaken the people. They see their sufferings and empathize with them.

Their mission has always been to give people hope in times of difficulties and pains. The Islamic Community has been outspoken against evil and ills in our Society. They expose ills and help to direct the nation and its people toward a morality that recognizes their plight and identifies with them in their sufferings. Liberians of all walks of life value their contributions.

But as he and his officials celebrated one year in office last week, the president listened as one of his religious advisors hurled insults at those who disagree with the way they have wrongly conducted the affairs of the nation so far. That event was held in a church founded, owned and operated by Isaac Winker, a close relative of the president and who also serves on the Board of JFK. Winker's insults and pronounced "curses" were not simply directed at the president's critics and political opponents. Instead, they were an assault on Freedom.

You are also aware that our constitution prohibits the establishment of any State religion. That is why we condemn the president's decision to establish what, evidently, looks like a desperate move to regiment the entire machinery of Government toward the president's unclear religious beliefs. Sooner or later public officials and civil servants will be intimidated and their true "loyalty" questioned if they do not subscribe to the president's religious beliefs. Any theology that encourages the president to establish his own religion (whether church or mosque) while he is yet in office violates the Liberian constitution. His message failed to address this grave matter. In fact, he owes the religious community and the entire citizenry apologies for undermining the principle of separation of religion and state.

... Cont'd from page 5 **JOINT RESPONSE**

Is the president not ashamed that the economy is in tatters and that it will decline further? Is he unaware that businesses are closing down? That Liberians are being thrown out of business to make way for the president, his cronies and handful of foreign partners? Haven't government ministries and agencies become idle because this administration is characterized by gross incompetence? Did he say anything about this in his mess-age (i.e. mess+age)?

It was obvious that the president would harp about minimal efforts commenced to continue road and other works started years ago. We appreciate this. What one administration initiates, its successor should continue, especially with the blueprint available. Many of the ongoing projects were in their different implementation phases long before this administration came into being on January 22, 2018. What is at issue here is the violation of the PFM and Public Procurement Laws in disbursing funds for these projects.

Besides, where could the administration have begun from with its lack of direction and glaring incompetence if these projects had not been initiated before he assumed office? So the argument cannot be about who should claim credit. How the economy is performing is a major concern to Liberians. You Liberians wanted to hear from the president on how he intends to change the deteriorating trend and put the country back on course. He failed to do this today.

What you Liberians demand urgently is an integrated approach to development that prioritizes the key sectors to make them productive once again. You are anxious to see a model that identifies practical ways to solve our social, economic, political and cultural problems. You expected to hear how the president intends to:

- ? maintain peace and security;
  - ? promote democratic good governance and the rule of law;
  - ? make agriculture real and productive once again (i.e. food and cash crop production for domestic consumption and export);
  - ? improve health-care services through hospitals, health centers and clinics that are operating at their full capacity;
  - ? improve Liberia's global image and geopolitical standing;
  - ? make Liberia business-friendly and competitive once more;
  - ? take steps to end corruption as he swore to do;
  - ? make real the so-called tuition-free policy for public universities and colleges as pronounced last year and remove suspicion that the utterance was a mere publicity stunt;
  - ? continue efforts geared toward improving the quality of education;
  - ? reconcile a deeply divided country;
  - ? protect foreign direct investments while attracting new investors;
  - ? govern Liberia for all Liberians and not for his cheering squads or one small segment of society;
  - ? recognize that despite the fraudulent nature of the 2017 elections, at least 62% of Liberians rejected his leadership and therefore cannot be overlooked;
  - ? make real the promise that Liberians will not be "spectators in their own economy";
- and
- ? stop the witch hunt and clampdown against dissent and punish those employing violence in his name, etc.

We hope that the same interest, enthusiasm, energy, devotion, alacrity and speed with which the Legislature has proceeded to entertain impeachment proceedings against a member of the Supreme Court Bench will be shown in pushing for impeachment proceedings against the president for violation of the Constitution and laws of Liberia.

We call on the Legislature to initiate this action now because his administration has already violated Articles 14, 39, 62, 90 of the Liberian constitution, the Public Financial Management (PFM), Anti-Corruption, and Public Procurement and Concessions Laws. These laws were enacted to promote good governance.

We are prepared to work with those representatives and senators who will take up these violations. They are too grave to be ignored. If at the stroke of a pen the Legislature could entertain impeachment proceedings against a member of the Judiciary, what about instituting a similar action against the president for the many violations recorded within a single year? Should the Legislature wait for all provisions of the constitution to be violated before acting?

We will support and stand with those lawmakers who will muster the courage to take up this patriotic challenge. We will stand with you all the way. Wherever necessary, we will mobilize the whole nation behind this cause. We must remove the growing threat to our democracy and peace.

We appreciate recent utterance by the President Pro tempore of The Senate in assuring Liberians that Associate Justice Jan'eh will be accorded due process. We also laud the pronouncement that the so-called Dual Citizenship Bill cannot be considered in the absence of the appropriate constitutional amendment. The submission of such a bill without first considering the constitutional implications was a serious blunder.

Finally, as the nation bleeds from economic wounds inflicted on it by the CDC-led administration, today the President elected to present no clear policy prescriptions to remedy this situation. He downplayed the grave issue of corruption. In today's message, he made no mention of measures that his administration has taken to end this menace. We expected this avoidance because he himself is wrapped up in the corruption blanket.

But you cannot avoid reality. A government that shows no remorse for or genuine commitment to addressing the issues and concerns of the citizenry and continuously encourages bad governance does not deserve their respect. We know that you certainly do not believe a word the president said today.

May GOD ALMIGHTY bless and save our wonderful and great Nation. Unity all the way!

We thank you.

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ALTERNATIVE NATIONAL CONGRESS-ANC

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ALL LIBERIAN PARTY-ALP

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LIBERTY PARTY-LP

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UNITY PARTY-UP

**OPINION**

By Chris Patten

**Brexit Sweat and Tears**

LONDON - I recently saw an American play in London called "Sweat," written by the Pulitzer Prize-winning dramatist Lynn Nottage. It was performed previously on and off Broadway and was described by the Wall Street Journal as a play that helped to explain Donald Trump's election as president.

Nottage had spent some time talking to the residents of a poor city in Pennsylvania which was losing jobs and its modest prosperity because of the contraction of the steel industry. Competition from cheaper manufacturers and lower-paid workers around the world had devastated an already-weak economy and provoked conflict between friends, relatives, and races.

Economically marginalized workers were also feeling culturally beleaguered. The world in which they had grown up - its values and fixed identity - was, it seemed to them, being systematically trashed. They turned - not necessarily in the expectation of answers - to a billionaire outsider who, unlike the political elites, had not yet let them down and appeared to share their contempt for the establishment.

Some politicians and commentators have sought to explain the vote for Brexit in the United Kingdom along similar lines. But while economic grievances and a generalized hostility to immigration and the political establishment help to explain the results of the 2016 referendum, they are far from a complete explanation.

The first thing to note is that while only a minority of Labour voters chose to leave the European Union, a large majority of Conservative voters in well-off areas outside London did so, as the newspapers they mostly read advised. Today, moreover, the anti-European virus in the Conservative Party membership has spread widely - though, given the paucity of Conservative members, this has not involved a very long journey.

As their numbers have fallen, Conservative Party members have moved increasingly to an English nationalist view of the world. That is not unusual. When a political party's active membership declines, its views become more extreme, and a spiral begins: as the party becomes more extreme, membership falls further, fueling greater extremism, and so on.

Conservative Party membership has also become older. One wag recently said that virtually all Conservative activists could fit into Wembley Stadium, though they might have difficulty with the steps.

While the majority of older voters backed Brexit, the young voted overwhelmingly to stay. Gloomy forecasts have calculated that death and the arrival of new young voters on the electoral register have already demolished the majority support for leaving the EU. That calculation does not include what is now a perceptible shift in attitudes in favor of Remain.

It also seems significant that a majority of Anglican church members voted to leave, and that Leavers were likely to live outside London and to be English. Scotland and Northern Ireland voted heavily to remain. I suspect that what we have witnessed is less a feeling of economic insecurity than a sense that times have changed in a way that older, Conservative nationalists do not like.

For years after World War II, the British - and especially the English - were aware of the palpable shift in the country's fortunes. But there was a deep aversion to accepting the UK's diminished status. We had been a great imperial power, whose economic and political authority had been waning since the beginning of the twentieth century. Yet we were still capable of great things. Under Winston Churchill's leadership, we played a major role in defeating fascism. But, despite Churchill's own somewhat ambivalent attempts to teach us to adjust to a new European role in the world, we continued to see ourselves as a bigger power than we were.

Churchill himself was reluctant to say that the days of Britain's empire were at an end, and that we earned our place at the world's top table principally because of what we had been, rather than what we might be able to contribute - in demographic, military, or economic terms - in the future.

One of Churchill's own wartime scientific advisers, Henry Tizard, said that we had once been a great power as well as a great nation. But if we continued to try to behave like a great power, he continued, there was a danger that we would compromise our ability to remain a great nation. The debacle of Britain's military intervention in 1956 in Egypt to try to retain control of the Suez Canal should have taught us that we were living in a new post-imperial age.

When the UK joined the European Union in 1973, we were in danger of becoming an object of sympathy, the sick man of Europe. Over the years, we prospered in Europe, shaping it in our own interest and avoiding the bits of the European enterprise that we did not like - a single currency and social policies that would inhibit growth. But, naturally, we accepted that to ensure the fairness and success of the single European market, we needed to pool sovereignty and share in decision-making about some European laws and regulations. Equally, as a medium-size power, we were more likely to be able to protect and advance our interests by negotiating trade and other matters as part of a bloc of other mostly medium-size countries.

But all of this has been deeply unpalatable to those who think that working with others somehow undermines our sovereignty. They fail to comprehend that international cooperation is required to solve most of the big national problems - from illegal immigration to climate change - that face us today and will face us in the future. Moreover, on our own we would have to accept many of the rules and regulations made by others, not least in earning our living around the world. There is no point in crying about it. Gunboat diplomacy is a thing of the past, and even if it wasn't, we have very few gunboats anymore!

Recognizing that opinion in Parliament is moving strongly against leaving the EU on the terms proposed by May, with a growing number of members even in favor of a second referendum to test whether we should leave at all, some right-wingers have flirted with the idea of trying to close down the House of Commons for a time. They want the government to be able to get its own way without any democratic opposition. It is a sign of their desperation to get Britain out of the EU whatever the constitutional or economic cost.

Is May prepared to get to grips with this? If she runs away from the task, despite growing Parliamentary unease about the path we are on, Britain is in big trouble.

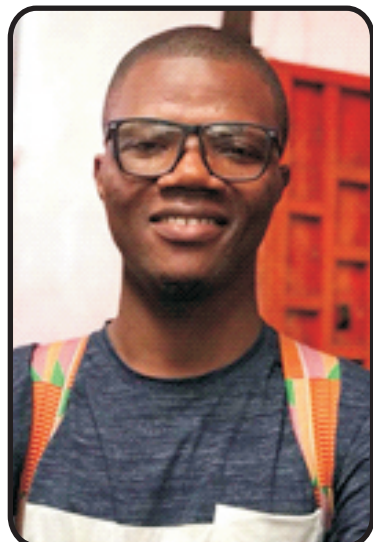
# LIBERIANS DEBATE

With Sally H. Gaye Cell#: 0886726282 Email:sh0770291004@gmail.com



President George Manneh Weah delivered his 2nd Annual Message to the 54th Legislature on Monday, 28 January calling for enactment of a National Youth Act that has been before the House of Representatives for some time now, among other bills still pending before that body.

In this spot-check, the New Dawn solicits views of young people in Monrovia on the proposed legislation by the President.



**Titus B. Pakalah Jr.**

“I support the National Youth Act and other legislations that reflect the prospects of Liberian youths in national economic recovery process, governance and innovation. These legislations should not only address the ensuing consequences of economic inequality, but must point out social-gender gap that impedes citizens’ access to sensitive justice and rule of law. This Act should be validated based on people’s rights and the enormous effect women, children and the entirety of the Liberian people do face, in that moral and state crimes which seem prevalent against the poverty-stricken majority are ideally referenced to resolution. I support this Act!”



**Mohammed A. Foboi**

“Today’s pronouncement has rekindled the hope of many young persons to have an audible voice in the governance of the State and inclusive public agenda that has youth development at the fulcrum of national development. This is a massive approval that the 65% of our population deserves better than the struck off experience they have had over the years. The national youth act and the act to make all public universities and colleges free. The act to establish the technical and vocational education commission and the act to decriminalize libel, sedition, and criminal benevolent against the President, let me say thanks to President George Weah for just [the]four legislations are enough for the development of the young people.”

**Josiah Trustacious Farr Jr.**

“I strong support the proposed enactment of the much heralded National Youth act [that] has over the year languished in Committee room, subjected to public discussion but lagged behind in courage by the status quo to legislate the youth platform.”



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Welcome To The New World

## “Insulting President Weah unacceptable”

**--Rep. Edwin Snow**

By Lewis S. Teh

Bomi County District # 3 Rep. Edwin Snow has frowned on his colleague, Rep. Yekeh Kolubah of Montserrado County District #10 for is alleged personal attack on President George Manneh Weah.

Rep. Snow who appeared on Truth FM in Duport Road, Paynesville on Monday, 28 January says Rep. Kolubah has the right to criticize the president where necessary, but not to insult the president.

Snowe says he welcomes Rep. Kolubah’s critical stance on the government because criticism helps the democracy to move in the fastest way that it should move.

According to Snowe, asking for the president’s bank account is not a problem. But he says accusing the president of allegedly taking half of the 16 billion to his house without showing prove is unfair.

He says there is a need to stop making such claim. Rep. Snowe agrees that one can disagree with the president, but that disagreement can be done without necessarily insulting the president.

According to him, all of the young people that are in government today were critical on the Unity Party (UP) government, but the idea of insulting the president is wrong and is unacceptable for Liberia’s democracy.

Snowe says he personally met Rep. Kolubah and confronted him on the issue of his utterances toward the president, and Kolubah has allegedly promised to desist from throwing insults at the president.

Snowe notes that he will personally condemn Kolubah if there is any repetition of this act against the president.

He dispels rumors that the police are investigating Rep. Kolubah, saying the

investigation issue was set up by a board that include the Bar Association, Civil Society and other people.

Snowe notes that after the investigation, if apology is required, Kolubah will apologize for his action.

“If Yekeh insults the president again, myself will condemn him, but he has committed himself to never again throw insult at the president, and for that I think it is a good idea, because it helps our democracy,” Snowe says.

The Bomi County Representative indicates that Mr. Kolubah filed a complaint, while the police also filed a complaint.

Snowe says he filed a motion that Kolubah will not subject himself to investigation, but will face a board that was set up by the Legislature.

According to him, the intent is to get to the root cause of this entire incident that took place recently in Kolubah’s district when a program that the lawmaker had organized for kids got disrupted by violence by protesters

mostly believed to supporters of ruling Coalition for Democratic Change (CDC).

Mr. Kolubah remains critical against the CDC - led government.

According to Rep. Snow, Yekeh Kolubah was not the only person facing investigation, but Police Director Col. Patrick Sudue is also facing questioning over the matter that took place in District #10.

He says it was one of the reasons why they set up an independent board to investigate both parties and bring up the facts.

Meanwhile, Snowe says lawmakers were unfairly judged by the public over Kolubah’s case, assuring that they will never set up their colleagues.

He narrates that the way lawmakers do things at the Legislature is far different from the way people see things in the public.

He explains that lawmakers work in accordance with the law as per their duties.--Edited by Winston W. Parley

**PRES. GEORGE MANNEH WEAH SECOND ANNUAL MESSAGE**

ANNUAL MESSAGE  
TO THE SECOND SESSION  
OF THE  
FIFTY-FOURTH NATIONAL LEGISLATURE  
OF THE  
REPUBLIC OF LIBERIA  
DELIVERED

BY  
HIS EXCELLENCY DR. GEORGE MANNEH WEAH  
PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF LIBERIA  
THE CAPITOL BUILDING  
CAPITOL HILL  
MONROVIA, LIBERIA

28 JANUARY 2019

MADAM VICE PRESIDENT AND PRESIDENT OF THE SENATE;  
MR. SPEAKER;  
MR. PRESIDENT PRO-TEMPORE;  
MADAM FIRST LADY  
HONORABLE MEMBERS OF THE LEGISLATURE;  
YOUR HONOR THE CHIEF JUSTICE, ASSOCIATE JUSTICES OF THE  
SUPREME COURT AND MEMBERS OF THE JUDICIARY;  
THE DEAN AND MEMBERS OF THE CABINET AND OTHER GOVERNMENT  
OFFICIALS;  
THE DOYEN AND MEMBERS OF THE DIPLOMATIC AND CONSULAR  
CORPS;  
HIS EXCELLENCY, THE SPECIAL REPRESENTATIVE OF THE SECRETARY-  
GENERAL OF THE UNITED NATIONS IN LIBERIA;  
THE RESIDENT COORDINATOR OF THE UNITED NATIONS;  
THE CHIEF OF STAFF AND MEN AND WOMEN OF THE ARMED FORCES OF  
LIBERIA (AFL);  
OFFICIALS OF GOVERNMENT EMERITUS;  
TRADITIONAL LEADERS;  
POLITICAL AND BUSINESS LEADERS;  
RELIGIOUS LEADERS;  
OFFICERS AND MEMBERS OF THE NATIONAL BAR ASSOCIATION;  
LABOR AND TRADE UNIONS;  
CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANIZATIONS;  
YOUTH AND STUDENTS;  
MEMBERS OF THE PRESS;  
SPECIAL GUESTS;  
DISTINGUISHED LADIES AND GENTLEMEN;  
FELLOW LIBERIANS:

Six days ago, through the Grace of the Almighty God, the Coalition for Democratic Change (CDC) was blessed to celebrate our first anniversary as an incumbent political party. On that day, we gave God the Glory, and also gave Him thanks and praise for His Guidance; His Goodness; and His Mercy; without which we would not have been here today, and would not have had the cause to rejoice.

And as we gather here in fulfillment of my Constitutional Mandate to deliver my Annual Message, may I ask you to rise for a moment of silence for the souls of all the faithful departed who are no longer within our midst, but who made the transition, from earthly labor to eternal rest, during the year under review.

[PAUSE FOR SILENT PRAYER]

MADAM VICE PRESIDENT, MR. SPEAKER, MR. PRESIDENT-PRO TEMPORE,  
HONORABLE MEMBERS OF THE 54TH LEGISLATURE:

As you begin this 2nd Session of the 54th Legislature, let me remind you that, a little over a year ago, during my inauguration,

I took an oath before you, and before the Almighty God, to uphold our Constitution and to preside over this Government and this country to the best of my abilities. This includes, among others, ensuring freedom of speech and, by extension, freedom of the press; freedom of assembly, revitalizing our economy, rebuilding our infrastructures, providing protection for our people, and ensuring respect for the rule of law.

On this auspicious occasion, I must be honest to admit that during the year of 2018, our democracy, society and economy were tested but our leadership rose above these challenges. We stabilized our economy, protected the fundamental rights of our citizens and preserved our peace.

MADAM VICE PRESIDENT, MR. SPEAKER, MR. PRESIDENT PRO-TEMPORE,  
HONORABLE MEMBERS OF THE 54TH LEGISLATURE:

I would like to thank you for your cooperation in passing into law several pieces of legislation relevant to the Pro-poor Agenda for Prosperity and Development during the period under review.

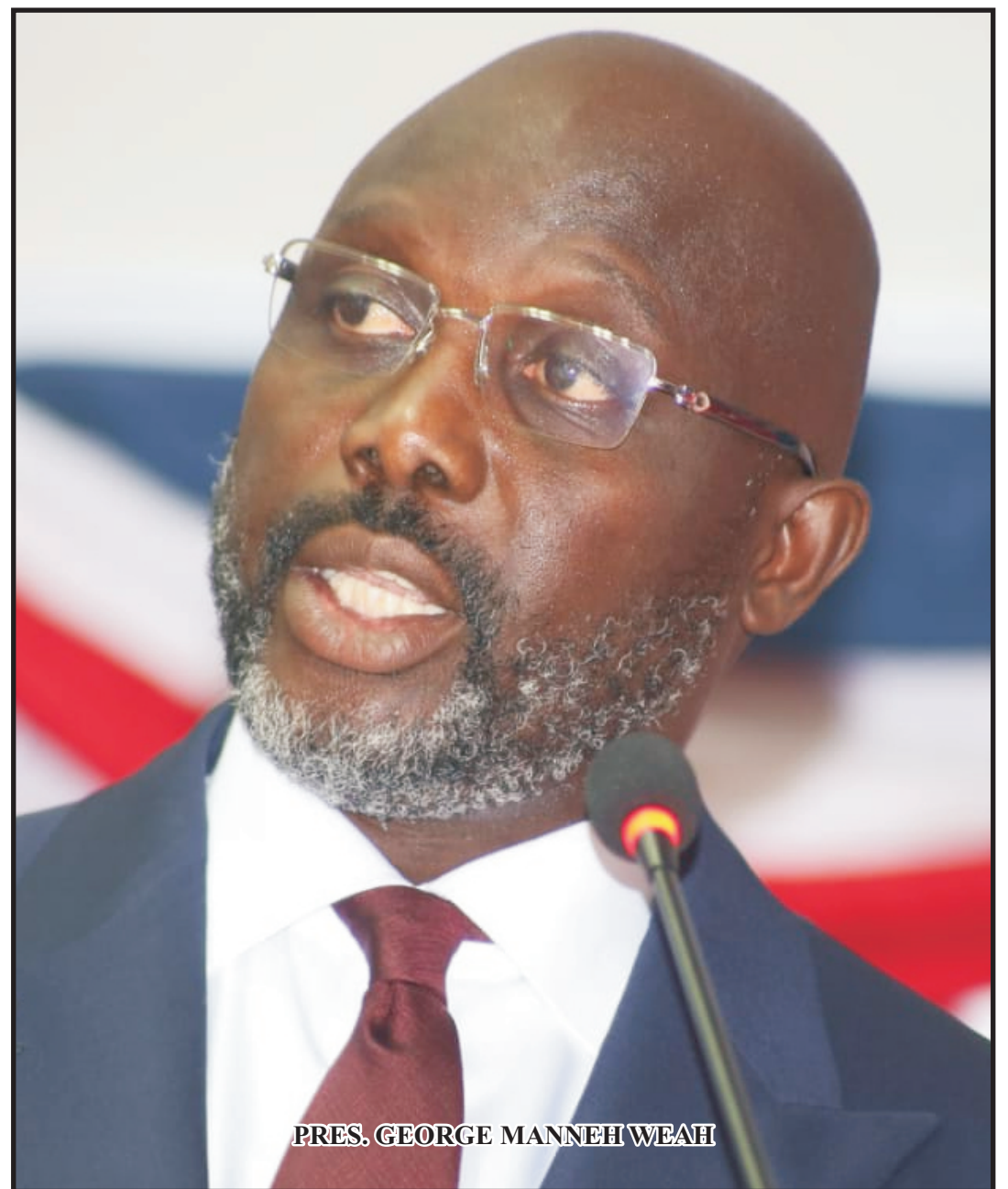
The records show that you passed 26 Bills into law during your First Session and submitted them for my approval.

These Bills include (among others):

1. An Act to Ratify the Financing Agreement to provide additional financing for the West African Power Pool.

2. The amount of this additional financing Agreement is \$45.3 Million United States dollars, comprising a grant component of \$22.6 million United States dollars; and a loan component of \$22.7 million United States dollars.

The objective is to support Government's effort in providing reduced and affordable cost of electricity, that will be efficient and reliable for the Liberian people in both the rural and urban areas. The West African Power Pool Project also seeks to strengthen Liberia's diplomatic ties



PRES. GEORGE MANNEH WEAH

and cooperation with our sub-regional counterparts, as the power line runs from Cote D'Ivoire to Liberia and goes to Sierra Leone and Guinea.

3. Two other cardinal legal instruments were passed, that are considered essential to the Government's Pro-Poor Agenda for Prosperity and Development:

- a. The Local Government Act of 2018;
- b. Act to Establish the Land Rights Law of 2018

These two landmark legislations are in line with current national and international realities, and are important for the stability and development of our country.

HONORABLE MEMBERS OF THE 54TH LEGISLATURE, we also appreciate your passing into law an ACT TO NAME BALI ISLAND AND THE MAHATMA GANDHI CONVENTION CENTER.

This has paved the way for the friendly Government of India, to assist the people of Liberia in their infrastructural development drive, by building a Modern Convention Center that will host conventions, conferences, and exhibitions, as well as serving as a major tourist attraction. We want to thank the Government and people of India for this kind gesture.

AN ACT TO RATIFY THE INVESTMENT INCENTIVE AGREEMENT BETWEEN THE REPUBLIC OF LIBERIA AND FOUTA CORPORATION.

Under the Fouta Agreement, the Investor will construct and develop a five hundred (500) tons per day cement plant, expandable to one thousand (1,000) tons per day.

This plant represents \$25 million United States dollars of new Foreign Direct Investment into our economy, and will provide additional support for our infrastructural development projects.

Thank you for also passing into law:

1. AN ACT RATIFYING THE AGREEMENT FOR THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE EXPORT-IMPORT BANK (AFREXIMBANK);
2. AN ACT TO AMEND THE REVENUE CODE OF LIBERIA, TO REFORM EXCISE TAX LAW (2018);
3. AN ACT TO RATIFY THE PARIS AGREEMENT SIGNED BY THE GOVERNMENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF LIBERIA;
4. AN ACT TO RATIFY THE INTERNATIONAL CONVENTION ON MUTUAL ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANCE FOR THE PREVENTION, INVESTIGATION AND REPRESSION OF CUSTOMS OFFENCES;

HONORABLE LADIES AND GENTLEMEN:

You may recall that I have vetoed two Agreements that were forwarded for my approval, including:

1. AN ACT TO RATIFY THE MINERAL DEVELOPMENT AGREEMENT BETWEEN THE GOVERNMENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF LIBERIA AND HUMMINGBIRD RESOURCES (LIBERIA) INC.; AND

2. AN ACT TO CREATE ZEYEAMA DISTRICT WITHIN LOFA





... Cont'd from page 8

## ANNUAL MESSAGE

COUNTY, REPUBLIC OF LIBERIA.

In the case of the Hummingbird Agreement, I am of the firm conviction that we acted in the spirit of ensuring the passage of legislation that will yield the maximum benefits to our Country and People. With regard to the creation of a new district within Lofa County, after careful review and analysis, we came to the conclusion that new statutory districts should only be created after the conduct of a careful study based on the justification, structure, population density, revenue base and economic viability.

This process should also take into consideration the necessity for effective administration and the need to bring services closer to the people.

I also believe that the LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT will ensure that new statutory districts are not created solely for political purposes or would not impose undue burdens on the National Budget. I look forward to working closely with you to derive an efficient and effective process regarding these issues.

MADAM VICE PRESIDENT, MR. SPEAKER, MR. PRESIDENT PRO-TEMPORE, HONORABLE MEMBERS OF THE 54TH LEGISLATURE:

During the year under review, we have submitted to you several Acts which remain pending and under your kind consideration.

These include:

1. AN ACT TO BE KNOWN AS THE KAMARA ABDULLAH KAMARA ACT OF PRESS FREEDOM.

This Bill protects people from crimes such as Criminal Libel against the President; Sedition and Criminal Malevolence.

It promotes freedom of speech and expression which are important tenets of our democracy. It also promotes good governance, as well as the rule of law.

We therefore respectfully urge you to consider the timely passage of this Bill; as well as other Bills essential to our Pro-poor Agenda for Prosperity and Development that have been submitted to you, but remain under deliberations in your Committee Rooms.

We refer particularly, to the following:

1. THE DUAL CITIZENSHIP BILL  
2. THE DOMESTIC VIOLENCE ACT;  
3. AN ACT TO NAME CERTAIN ROADS AND BRIDGES WITHIN THE REPUBLIC OF LIBERIA;

4. AN ACT TO AMEND THE REVENUE CODE OF LIBERIA, TO ADOPT A MODERNIZED CUSTOMS CODE (2018);

5. AN ACT PROHIBITING THE TENURE OF PUBLIC OFFICIALS WITHIN THE EXECUTIVE BRANCH OF GOVERNMENT;

6. THE ECOWAS CUSTOMS CODE;

7. INTERNATIONAL CONVENTION ON THE SIMPLIFICATION AND HARMONIZATION OF CUSTOMS PROCEDURES;

8. THE NATIONAL LOTTERIES AMENDMENT ACT;

MADAM VICE PRESIDENT, MR. SPEAKER, MR. PRESIDENT PRO-TEMPORE AND HONORABLE MEMBERS OF THE 54TH LEGISLATURE:

As we enter our second year of governance, we intend to submit several new bills for your consideration to enable our Administration deliver on its Pro-Poor Agenda for Development and Prosperity. These will include, among others:

1. AN ACT TO RATIFY AND AUTHORIZE THE PAYMENT BY THE GOVERNMENT OF LIBERIA OF TUITION FEES FOR ALL UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS IN ALL PUBLIC UNIVERSITIES AND COLLEGES IN LIBERIA.

2. THE NATIONAL YOUTH ACT

3. LIBERIA TECHNICAL VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING COMMISSION ACT

4. REVISED LIBERIAN BANK FOR DEVELOPMENT & INVESTMENT ACT

MADAM VICE PRESIDENT, MR. SPEAKER, MR. PRESIDENT PRO-TEMPORE, HONORABLE MEMBERS OF THE 54TH LEGISLATURE:

During 2018, we issued one (1) Executive Order to address a national imperative: EXECUTIVE ORDER NO. 93: EXTENSION OF EXECUTIVE ORDER NO. 87 SUSPENSION OF TARIFF ON RICE.

MADAM VICE PRESIDENT, MR. SPEAKER, MR. PRESIDENT PRO-TEMPORE AND HONORABLE MEMBERS OF THE 54TH LEGISLATURE:

I was elected into Office upon the four pillars of our Party Manifesto, namely:

1. POWER TO THE PEOPLE;
2. ECONOMY AND JOBS;
3. SUSTAINING THE PEACE;
4. GOVERNANCE AND TRANSPERANCY;

These four pillars, which were the core embodiment of my last Annual Message and Legislative Agenda, are now developed into our National Plan, called the Pro-Poor Agenda for Development and Prosperity (PAPD) and was officially launched on 29th October 2018.

The overall objective of the PAPD, and its ultimate goal, is to lift our People from poverty to prosperity.

As a first step towards achieving this goal, it is our intention, and our determination, to reduce poverty by 23% percent by the end of 2023, by providing greater income security for an additional one million Liberians who now live below the poverty line.

Secondly, the PAPD seeks to build more capable state institutions for efficient and effective service delivery. These will require collective efforts toward the pragmatic implementations of programs and projects under the four pillars of our Pro-Poor Agenda.

MADAM VICE PRESIDENT, MR. SPEAKER, MR. PRESIDENT PRO-TEMPORE, HONORABLE MEMBERS OF THE 54TH LEGISLATURE:

The Constitution of the Republic of Liberia mandates the government to provide education for all Liberians.

During the period under review, we undertook new measures and mechanisms for transforming and sustaining an educational system that is adequate to ensure that the constitutional obligation of the Government is met.

The government, through the Ministry of Education, firstly carried out a review process that included: evaluation of the existing legal and administrative framework; nationwide visits to all schools throughout the country; and the hosting of a national stakeholder's summit. As a result of this process, several activities were implemented in a bid to enhance efficiency in the education sector.

These activities include:

1. Completion of Curricular revision from early grades through high school. The new curriculum places emphasis on skills delivery, early career pathway and addressing deficiencies in literacy and numeracy.

2. Payroll Cleaning Exercise which netted savings of \$2 Million United States dollars as of November 2018.

The savings enabled the government to enroll nearly one thousand one hundred (1,100) out of three thousand seven hundred and sixty-four (3,764) teachers who for nearly nine (9) years have been paid irregularly and substantially below salaries earned by other civil servants.

3. Increase the number of scholarships awarded to more than one thousand one hundred and sixty-five (1,165) students, which included one hundred and twenty-nine (129) foreign scholarships, costing the Government a total of \$2.5 Million United States dollars. The Government of China and Morocco, and several other countries, awarded bilateral scholarships to nearly one hundred (100) Liberians to pursue studies in those countries.

4. This amounts to a total of one hundred and sixty-three (163) students in foreign countries and one thousand three hundred (1,300) on local scholarships in all universities across Liberia. In 2018 the Government also awarded foreign sponsorship to the seven (7) best-performing students on the 2017/2018 WASSCE Examinations.

5. Tuition Waiver for All Public Universities and Colleges

6. Under the 2018 / 2019 Public Sector Investment Project appropriation, the Ministry of Education was allocated \$4 Million United States dollars for infrastructure improvement and expansion, including the renovation of thirty-three (33) public schools and the refurbishment of fifteen (15) science laboratories in public secondary schools. In addition, seventy-eight thousand (78,000) pieces of modern chairs were purchased for public schools across the country.

7. WASSCE Intervention Program. The government of Liberia paid the WASSCE fees for all thirty-three thousand nine hundred and thirty-one (33,931) 12th graders, and seventeen thousand six hundred and seventy-nine (17,679) 9th graders; amounting to the sum of \$2.03 million United States dollars and \$41.5 million Liberian dollars respectively, as a means of relieving parents and students of the financial burden associated with the exams, and improve performance.

8. Additionally, to reduce mass failures among 12th graders in the 2017/2018 WASSCE examinations, the Ministry of Education with support from the national government, launched in November 2018 the "WASSCE Intervention Project", aimed to improve Liberian students' performance on the 2018/2019 examinations. The project provides Saturday tutorials for all 12th graders in the country, free of charge. The cost of the project is a little over three hundred and fifty thousand (\$350,000) United States dollars.

HONORABLE MEMBERS OF THE 54TH LEGISLATURE, in addition to the interventions made by the government to shift the paradigm for a better education system, we also received strong support from our international partners to the Education component of the Pro-Poor Agenda for Prosperity & Development (PAPD).

a. The World Bank IDA made a grant/loan of \$25 Million United States dollars for investment in Public Secondary Schools, including construction, rehabilitation, setting up of laboratories, provision of teachers' residences in rural school communities, girls retention through secondary school, and a host of other interventions helpful for secondary school children.

b. THE GLOBAL PARTNERSHIP FOR EDUCATION MADE AN INITIAL INVESTMENT OF \$11.1 MILLION UNITED STATES DOLLARS intervention in Early Childhood Development initially covering six counties. A secondary grant of \$5.9 million United States dollars was also provided to top up the initial amount, making a total of \$17 million United States dollars, all of which have been dedicated to the development of Early Grade Schools.

c. THE EUROPEAN UNION MADE AN INVESTMENT OF 20 MILLION EUROS, dedicated to the development of Technical Vocational Education in Liberia. The project will benefit all youth, whether enrolled in school or out of school, through the Ministries of Education and Youth & Sports. An additional 12.5 million Euros, previously set aside by the European Union for Out-of-School Youth, is being requested by the Ministry of Education to expand and continue the investment in vocational education (formal & informal). That application, when approved and finalized, will bring to 32 million Euros which will be targeting vocational education in several counties.

d. The Swedish Government has also committed itself to investing approximately 5 Million Euros for Vocational and Skills Education in Liberia, designated specifically for reconstructing and equipping the Voinjama

... Cont'd from page 9

**ANNUAL MESSAGE**

Multilateral High School which was destroyed during the war.

e. The current commitment of the USAID to Education aggregates to \$60.9 Million United States dollars. The USAID investment comprises \$27million United States dollars for the READ LIBERIA PROJECT, and \$33.9 Million United States dollars for the ACCELERATED QUALITY EDUCATION PROGRAM.

These two amounts, separately designated for education development by USAID, are designed to enhance early grade reading, particularly for Grades 1 & 2, and enrolling out-of-school children into learning programs, which is estimated to benefit forty-eight thousand (48,000) children residing in six (6) counties.

f. INVESTMENT OF \$30 MILLION UNITED STATES DOLLARS IN SCHOOL FEEDING PROGRAMS FOR 5 YEARS. The School Feeding Program which is ongoing as of 2018, is expected to benefit over one hundred thousand (100,000) school children in 240 primary schools situated in four (4) counties, primarily in the South-Eastern counties of Liberia, because of their special situation.

MADAM VICE PRESIDENT, MR. SPEAKER, MR. PRESIDENT PRO-TEMPORE, HONORABLE MEMBERS OF THE 54TH LEGISLATURE:

Our government recognizes that the young people of Liberia, as the largest component of our population, hold the ultimate key for the development and prosperity of Liberia.

We recognize that youth unemployment and the lack of opportunities are not only hindrances to economic development and transformation, but are also potential threats to national security.

Therefore, the Government of Liberia, through the Ministry of Youth & Sports, sees the provision of skills and sustainable employment to young people as matters of strategic importance for transformation of Liberia and placing the country on a path to sustained peace. We have therefore focused on several key strategic interventions to alleviate some of the issues in Youth Employment and Empowerment and Sports Development.

We have completed the recruitment of young people who are to be beneficiaries of youth empowerment and employment activities under our YOUTH ENTREPRENEURSHIP AND EMPLOYMENT PROJECT, YOUTH OPPORTUNITIES PROJECT, and the NATIONAL CADET PROGRAM. About fifteen thousand (15,000) individuals and households are expected to benefit from these programs, collectively.

The Youth Opportunities Project has to date benefited one hundred and twenty-nine (129) communities in all 15 counties.

Twenty-eight (28) farming groups comprising a total of three thousand six hundred and twelve (3,612) youths have received the first tranche of labor subsidy cash payments of one hundred and fifty (\$150) United States dollars per youth, to assist with some of their needs while on the farms.

Under the HOUSEHOLD ENTERPRISE component, one hundred (100) business groups consisting of 8 members in 10 communities across the country have completed their business plans.

These are now being reviewed, and accounts have been opened for each business group to received two thousand four hundred (\$2,400) United States dollars for business start-up.

Under the Productive Public Works component of Youth Opportunities Project, an additional three thousand six hundred and twelve (3,612) youths in 128 communities have been recruited across the country for Round Two implementation. The Youth Opportunities Project is also expected to receive additional financing of 3.5 Million Euros from the Swedish Government and 5 Million Euros from French Government.

The first batch of 110 cadets under the National Cadet Program were deployed to various Governmental and private institutions to afford them an opportunity to gain some work experience.

In addition, over five thousand (5,000) young people have benefitted from our Sexual Reproductive Health Education and Treatment initiatives. Recognizing the importance of literacy in empowerment, the Youth Literacy Program has been revamped and launched in several communities.

Because of the importance of sustaining peace in Liberia, the Ministry continues to engage youth and their communities through the Youth Empowerment and Engagement through Social Cohesion program. Under this program, Community Peace Councils dedicated to teaching and practicing conflict resolution and prevention were formed in several communities in Bong, Cape Mount Margibi and Nimba Counties. The Councils conducted community peace dialogues that are meant to enhance the skills of youth, religious and traditional leaders in conflict resolution and the avoidance of negative values.

The Government, with support from the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) rolled out the YOUTHCONNECT Liberia Program. This is a socio-entrepreneur youth development program that seeks to develop young Liberians into productive citizens. The program supports youth in innovation, ICT, volunteerism, entrepreneurship, advocacy and leadership.

As part of the activities of the rollout, the Ministry of Youth and Sports dedicated a modern multi-purpose Innovation Lab and Digital Learning Room at the S.K.D Sport Complex. The facility is equipped with computers, projectors, and internet connectivity, and serves as a resource center that provides the space for online learning, peer mentorship, networking and training for youth within Montserrado County and its environs. Plans are being worked out by the Ministry and her partners to replicate similar facilities at our youth and community centers across the country.

HONORABLE MEMBERS OF THE 54TH LEGISLATURE:

Capacity development for our young people remains a matter of high priority for the government. Our TVET institutions graduated about three thousand (3,000) students, with the

Monrovia Vocational Training Centre accounting for two thousand seven hundred and nine (2,709) graduates. This was the first graduation since the Ebola crisis.

Also, the government have successfully completed negotiations with the European Union on the terms of a 20 million Euro grant, which is meant for the modernization of seven (7) TVET institutions in the country. The execution of this program has begun with the United Nations Industrial Development Organization as implementing partner.

The Ministry of Youth & Sports has completed assessments for the re-opening of the other TVET institutions – Tumutu Agriculture and Vocational Training Center in Bong County; Klay Agriculture and Vocational Training Center in Bomi County; and Youth Agriculture Training Center in Montserrado County. We are currently partnering with different organizations to improve and enhance TVET delivery across the country.

Under these partnerships, The Tumutu Agriculture Training Center, Youth Agriculture Training Center and Klay Agriculture Training Center will be beginning major activities within the next couple of months.

The ADEA, a working group on education management and policy support, has a five-year project for the development of the oil palm industry in Liberia, with emphasis in nursery development. Thirty (30) young Liberians from the western region of the Country are to benefit from the three-month intensive training in nursery development for the pilot phase of the project to be carried out in Klay Agriculture Vocational Training Center in Bomi County.

Under Chinese Assistance 2018, the Shandong Foreign Trade Vocational College of China, as part of its Overseas Foreign Aid Training Program, is conducting training focused on electricity, auto repair and construction. This intermediate training is expected to benefit 100 youths.

The government continues to champion the use of Sports as a tool for youth development and the promotion of social cohesion.

MADAM VICE PRESIDENT, MR. SPEAKER, MR. PRESIDENT PRO-TEMPORE, HONORABLE MEMBERS OF THE 54TH LEGISLATURE:

It is important to mention that the broken economy inherited by our administration, caused by the risk associated with the democratic transition in 2017, collapse of the country's major export commodities prices on the global market, the UNMIL withdrawal, and the effect of the Ebola Virus Disease in 2014, is still in a struggling state.

Despite these peculiar adverse economic circumstances, growth in real gross domestic product (GDP) recovered at 2.5 percent in 2017 and was projected to rise to 3 percent at the end of 2018. By 2023, we expect the economy to grow by a further 4.7 percent, on account of further expansion in commercial gold production, growth in the agricultural and forestry sectors, formation of Special Economic Zones, and other economic reforms envisage under the Pro-Poor Agenda for Prosperity and Development.

Even with these optimistic recovery forecasts, our projected growth rates are still below the pre-Ebola period, when the economy grew on average by 7.5 percent annually.

HONORABLE MEMBERS OF THE 54TH LEGISLATURE:

During the period under review, the Liberian Dollar performed poorly against the United State Dollar.

The average Liberian-dollar exchange rate with reference to the United States dollar, depreciated from L\$117 Liberian dollars to \$1.00 United States dollar in 2017; to L\$157.8 Liberian dollars to \$1.00 United States dollar at the end of 2018. At its lowest value before the government intervention, \$1.00 United States dollar was being exchange at L\$180 Liberia dollars.

This massive depreciation of the Liberian was primarily driven by the deterioration of the country's terms of trade, and an increase in demand for United States dollars to service imports. Other factors were the legacy of the UNMIL drawdown and the lingering adverse impact of the EBOLA crisis.

To help stabilize the situation, I delivered an economic speech in which I mandated the economic management team and the Central Bank of Liberia to find solutions to exchange rate and other macro-economic problems.

As a short-term quick fix, the Government approved \$25 million United States dollars to enable the Central Bank to intervene in the foreign exchange market. As of December 2018, a total of \$17 million United States dollars was used for the intervention, which significantly contributed to the general stability in the exchange rate for the past six months (July to December 2018). The balance \$8 million United States dollars is reserved by the CBL as a precautionary intervention fund..

As a sustainable remedy to the exchange rate problems, the Central Bank is concluding arrangements on the use of various monetary policy instruments, including the introduction of a Standing Deposit Facility, a Standing Credit Facility, and CBL indexed Bills and Notes, to ensure a more stable macroeconomic environment in 2019.

HONORABLE MEMBERS OF THE 54TH LEGISLATURE:

Liberia's trade deficit stood at \$561.8 million United States dollars for the period January to November 2018.

Although this represents a 17.1 percent improvement, as compared to \$677.3 million for the same period in 2017, it is important to note that the weak performance of the real economy has for so long been characterized by low export earnings as compared to payments for imports.

Though there has been improvement in the trade balance in 2018, the Liberian dollar still remains under pressure. Performance of two of our key commodities (iron ore and rubber) showed some level of improvements during the period under review.

Receipts from iron ore exports almost doubled, from \$57.8 million United States dollars, to \$106.5 million United States dollars, while rubber exports grew slightly from \$67 million United States dollars to \$68.9 million United States dollars,

... Cont'd from page 10

**ANNUAL MESSAGE**

compared to the same period in 2017.

In order to improve the external sector of the economy, there is an urgent need to support domestic production, which requires a major structural transformation of our economy. In this regard, under the Pro-Poor Agenda, agriculture has been considered a matter of priority to achieve this structural reform.

The GROSS FOREIGN RESERVES at the end of November 2018 was \$410.2 million United States dollars, reflecting a slight decline of 1.7 percent compared to the end of December 2017. This slight decline in Gross Foreign Reserves can be largely attributed to low export earnings.

Despite the challenges faced in the economy, the banking system remained resilient during the year under review. The banking system further experienced improvement in aggregate assets, deposits, loans and capitalization.

However, the stock of non-performing loans remains a major challenge for the banking system. The Central Bank is taking steps, including establishing a robust credit reference system, to address the issue of non-performing loans.

At the same time, the Government is working to improve the legal and policy environment to improve access to credit and to resolve other challenges in the private sector.

Nevertheless, the banking sector continues to play a significant role in providing credit to the economy. Credit to the private sector, which serves as the main engine of growth, rose by over 36.8 percent at the end of October 2018.

In addition, total credit as a percentage of GDP increased from 13.1 percent (2017) to 13.4 percent (2018), largely as a result of growth in loans to all major sectors, especially, the extractive sector, oil & gas sector, and the manufacturing sector.

We like to assure members of the banking sector that the Government of Liberia is committed to settling Government debt owed to banks from the previous administration.

Regarding the insurance sector, the Central Bank and the Government remain focused on implementing reform of the sector. The measures taken to bring stability to the sector has led to some improvement in the regulatory landscape and the sector.

Liberia has made progress in deepening the financial system through the national payments system and digital financial space. There has been an uptake in the use of mobile money services across the country as well as the automatic tellers' machines (ATMs), which has helped to increase access to payment.

The Government continues to pay civil servants through this mechanism, and there are efforts underway to use such digital platforms for Government revenue collection. These efforts are part of the Government's vision to digitize the Liberian economy and transition to a cash-less society.

MADAM VICE PRESIDENT, MR SPEAKER AND HONORABLE MEMBERS OF THE 54TH NATIONAL LEGISLATURE

During the year under review, the news media in Liberia was saturated with stories alleging that containers of Liberian dollars imported by the Central Bank were missing.

Given the gravity of the allegations, our administration took several actions in response, including setting up a Special Presidential Technical Committee to investigate.

In addition, the Government requested the assistance of the European Union, the African Union, the United States Government and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) to help in conducting a separate external investigation into the alleged missing money. With the assistance and support of USAID, an audit team from Kroll of London, England, was invited to independently investigate and report findings.

The Report from the Kroll Audit Team is expected at the end of February 2019, and will be released to the public by USAID.

If it is established that there has been any willful act of criminality, negligence, or malfeasance by anyone implicated in the reports, the full weight of the law will be brought to bear.

HONORABLE MEMBERS OF THE 54TH NATIONAL LEGISLATURE:

I am pleased to report that, despite the challenges to the economy, our robustness in revenue policy and administration and the support of donor partners resulted into greater revenue receipts in 2018 as compared to 2017.

REVENUE COLLECTION FOR 2018, INCLUDING GRANTS, WAS \$480.6 MILLION UNITED STATES DOLLARS, AS COMPARED TO \$454 MILLION UNITED STATES DOLLARS IN 2017, WHICH REPRESENTS GROWTH OF 5.7 PERCENT.

This strong performance was driven by higher receipts of tax and non-tax revenues.

To this end, our government is especially grateful to our partners for contributing approximately ten (10) times more in budget support grants in 2018 than in 2017 (\$38 million United States dollars in 2018, as compared to \$4.8 million in 2017) Tax revenue increased from \$384.9 million United States dollars in 2017, to \$387.6 million United States dollars in 2018. Non-tax revenue increased from \$55 million United States dollars in 2017, to \$64.7 million in 2018, mainly on account of active collection of the Road Fund Levy.

CORRESPONDINGLY, EXPENDITURE FOR 2018 AMOUNTED TO \$502 MILLION UNITED STATES DOLLARS, COMPARED TO \$434.3 MILLION UNITED STATES DOLLARS AT THE END OF NOVEMBER 2017. The increase in government expenditures consistently reminds us about the desire of the Liberian people for meaningful developments, which are in line with our Change for Hope mandate.

MADAM VICE PRESIDENT, MR SPEAKER AND HONORABLE MEMBERS OF THE 54TH NATIONAL LEGISLATURE

When we came to power, we inherited a debt of \$878.2 million United States dollars at the end

of 2017.

The debt stock now stands at \$987.8 million in 2018 at the end of 2018. The increase in the debt stock of \$109.6 million during the period under review is mainly on account of disbursements from borrowing external loan portfolios, including the World Bank, African Development Bank, BADEA and Saudi Arabia, which were ratified in 2017.

To date, my administration has not added to the debt stock but that does not mean we will not increase the stock of debt. In the interest of our people, we are working on this.

HONORABLE MEMBERS OF THE 54TH NATIONAL LEGISLATURE

Our administration remains grateful to our development partners for the level of assistance we have received since my ascendency as President of the Republic of Liberia. Total official development assistance received from January up to September 2018 is about \$399 million United States dollars in support of various programs and activities under our Pro-Poor Agenda.

To our partners, we say thank you, merci and obrigado!

Of this amount, approximately \$279.2 million United States dollars, represents seventy percent (70%) in grants; while the remaining \$120 million United States dollars represents thirty percent (30%) received as concessional loans.

This reflects the commitment of our partners and the international community to support the dream and aspiration of the Liberian people, and their confidence in our fiscal discipline.

MADAM VICE PRESIDENT, MR. SPEAKER AND HONORABLE MEMBERS OF THE 54TH NATIONAL LEGISLATURE, it is my singular honor to request this honorable body to join me in expressing our sincere thanks and profound appreciation to our donor partners.

HONORABLE MEMBERS OF THE LEGISLATURE

As the world's second largest shipping registry, we have carried out several programs and activities to strengthen, consolidate and expand our maritime program in the face of competition from new and emerging registries.

During the period under review, the Governments of Liberia and the People's Republic of China renewed the favored-nation Maritime Transport Agreement for another five (5) years, thus preserving our access to a vast market in the Far East. Additionally, discussions are in the final stages to conclude a MARITIME TRANSPORT AGREEMENT WITH THE REPUBLIC OF INDIA.

The government will continue to explore further opportunities to ensure that the competitive advantage we have as a world class maritime nation is increased to the benefit of the Liberian people.

MADAM VICE PRESIDENT MR. SPEAKER AND HONORABLE MEMBERS OF THE 54TH NATIONAL LEGISLATURE

In my Inaugural Address, I stated that my greatest contribution to this country as President may not lie in the eloquence of my speeches, but will definitely lie in the quality of the decisions that I will make over the next six years to advance the lives of Liberians. And, as I have often said, "I am a man of action".

It is against this backdrop that I have set my eyes on Roads as my administration's path to delivering a better living condition for the Liberian people.

Good road connectivity will enhance our economic development, our agriculture productivity and reduce travel times to schools and hospitals.

In fulfillment of the goal of the PAPD to connect every county to our commercial capital of Monrovia, we have targeted five hundred and seventeen kilometers (517 km) of paved primary roads. At the same time, we are creating community connectivity through the pavement of Community Roads throughout the country.

The Government of Liberia is working with the Ecowas Bank Investment and Development, the African Development, the World Bank and the provide sector to identify and scale up financing for the Coastal Highway.

During the period under review, three (3) new segments of primary road projects were initiated: the SANNIQUELLIE – LOGATUO ROAD project of forty-seven kilometers (47 km) with funding from the African Development Bank and the European Union; the GANTA – TAPPITTA - ZWEDRU ROAD project of two hundred and twenty-five kilometers (225 km) with funding from the Liberia Reconstruction Trust Fund.

Similarly, the German Government has contributed \$16 Million United States dollars and the World Bank has also contributed \$29 Million United States dollars to the Ganta – Tappitta - Zwedru Road project and the Gbarnga – Salayea Road project of eighty-one kilometers (81 km) is expected with funding from the Arab Banks.

In addition to these gains, the Government of Liberia has secured funding from the Arab Banks, led by the Kuwaiti Fund, for the ongoing Gbarnga to Salayea Road corridor to be extended to Voinjama via Konia in Lofa County, totaling one hundred and ninety-five kilometers (195 km).

Our concessionaire, ARCELORMITTAL, has started the GANTA – YEKEPA Road Project of sixty-seven kilometers (67 km), and the World Bank has finalized funding for six kilometers (6 km) of paved road from Coca Cola Factory to ELWA Junction.

It is also worthy to mention, that with support from the World Bank, the Government has successfully completed the National Road Inventory, which includes updated data on the current state of the road network in country.

The Government is undertaking a total of one hundred and fifty kilometers (150) km of Community Roads in fifty-seven (57) communities in Monrovia and its environs, as well as in Gbarnga, Bong County and in Buchanan, Grand Bassa County. These roads are being paved with funding from domestic revenues generated from taxes.

I am pleased to inform you that more than sixty-five percent (65%) of community roads are near completion. DOE COMMUNITY TO CLARA TOWN road and CHUGBOR ROAD are completed and dedicated.

... Cont'd from page 11

**ANNUAL MESSAGE**

Other gains in the road sector during the period under review include a road maintenance funding grant. Projects phase completion includes:

- 300,000 Euros provided by the German Government through GIZ;
- People's Republic of China for the Construction of 2 ultra-modern overpass bridges to be constructed at the SKD Boulevard and Ministerial Complex Intersections respectively on Tubman Boulevard;
- The Japanese Government thirteen point two kilometers (13.2km) Somalia Drive Road Phase I completion and Phase II commencement;
- The Liberian Swedish 400 km Feeder Road Project;
- The Government of India 144 Million commitment to build a conference center named in honor of Mahatma Gandhi to be built on Bali Island.

MADAM VICE PRESIDENT, MR. SPEAKER, MR. PRESIDENT PRO-TEMPORE, HONORABLE MEMBERS OF THE 54TH LEGISLATURE:

As the Liberia Electricity Cooperation (LEC) has been able to increase its supply out, the demand for electricity also increased. Insufficient transformers and overload led to several communities physically demanding service, sometimes resulting in demonstrations in some communities. The able technicians of LEC were able to mitigate some of the problems by introducing new transformers where needed and replacing damaged overload transformers.

There are more than 8000 new household connections, 324 new commercial connections, with 80 new large users added and in the process of being added. However, revenue collected accounts for about 40% of generated load, while power theft accounts for about 49% and technical losses accounts for 12%. There has not been a change in Tariff and that may not change until the problem of power theft is addressed through a policy reform.

Statistics showed that 10 % of power theft will cost the Liberia Electricity Corporation \$8 million United States dollars. Today, because of the increase in illegal connections, the LEC is losing in excess of \$35 million United States dollars per year to electricity theft.

This huge loss is preventing LEC from extending supply to many areas of the country where citizens are crying out for electricity. It is also preventing LEC from offering connections to many businesses, who in turn could offer much-needed employment opportunities to many Liberians.

Power Theft is ILLEGAL, AND SABOTAGES THE ECONOMY OF OUR COUNTRY. I appeal to you, my fellow Liberians, to stop this behavior of power theft NOW!! Let us work together to put an end to this dangerous crime and help LEC generate more revenue to expand its services to other communities and connect more citizens for the greater good of Liberia.

Government has already taken the following measures:

1. Provided the Ministry of Justice with additional funding to work in coordination with the Judiciary to fast track power theft cases.
2. Drafted a Bill to be forwarded to the Legislature that would make power theft an economic crime.
3. Began a rigorous implementation of mass disconnections of illegal connections and encouraging homes to legitimize their connections.
4. LEC enhanced community outreach as Joint Stakeholders to protect against illegal connections which result in damage transformers.

Much work has been done, but we acknowledge that there is still more to do.

MADAM VICE PRESIDENT, MR. SPEAKER, MR. PRESIDENT PRO-TEMPORE, HONORABLE MEMBERS OF THE 54TH LEGISLATURE:

We made a solemn commitment to protect and uphold the rights and freedoms of our citizens. During the period under review, the government maintained an enabling environment for the exercise of press freedom and freedom of speech.

The Liberia media remains vibrant and unfettered. Currently, there are more than seventy privately owned (70) radio and television stations with over 40 newspapers operating in the country. The media is a fundamental pillar of our democracy. While we applaud the plurality of the media, we have also engaged the Press Union of Liberia to devise ways of enhancing professionalism.

Because we have an obligation to provide factual information about the development agenda to our citizens, we have ramped up the efficiency and capacity of the government's own national media outlets. The national broadcaster, Liberia Broadcasting Corporation (ELBC & ELTV) has extended its coverage to leeward counties. In an effort to further disseminate information to the populace, the government has signed a \$10 million United States dollar Grant Agreement with the Government of the People's Republic of China as support to the LBS decentralization program.

The State-owned media, including the New Liberia publication and the Liberia News Agency, have become a premier disseminator of news and information from all around the country. We as a government will continue to rely on the independent media to compliment the effort of the state-owned media to keep the Liberian people engaged and informed of the activities of the government.

HONORABLE MEMBERS OF THE 54TH LEGISLATURE:

Liberia is a beautiful country with huge tourism potential. Our Government will continue to work to improve the tourism potential.

Tourism is largely a private-sector driven industry, but the government, in keeping with our own responsibility, has undertaken to craft the proper regulatory and administrative framework for the sector to thrive, within the framework of National Tourism Trade Export Strategy.

We are reviewing the option of seeking legislation to set up an independent national tourism board to regulate the sector and to attract investment in the sector.

MADAM VICE PRESIDENT, MR. SPEAKER, MR. PRESIDENT PRO-TEMPORE, HONORABLE MEMBERS OF THE 54TH LEGISLATURE:

I would like to reiterate to you today, what I said at the United Nation General Assembly last year: a nation which has experienced civil war must never take peace for granted, or forget the long shadow that years of conflict still cast over people's lives.

We must realize and appreciate that ours is still a fragile peace. As we strive to reconcile our people and consolidate all our resources toward a future of prosperity, we must uphold the rule of law to enable us forge a sustainable peace.

The peace that we enjoy today was bestowed upon us with the blood and resources of other countries; its sustainability is now our responsibility. We are constitutionally responsible under the law to protect our hard-won peace.

MADAM VICE PRESIDENT, MR. SPEAKER, MR. PRESIDENT PRO-TEMPORE, HONORABLE MEMBERS OF THE 54TH LEGISLATURE:

The Ministry of National Defense continues to ensure professional military training for soldiers and is working with international partners in restructuring a credible defense sector that would maintain the peace and provide the enabling environment for the implementation of the Pro-Poor Agenda for Prosperity and Development (PAPD).

During the period under review several local and international training opportunities were provided by our partners including The United States of America, The People's Republic of China, The Government of Bangladesh, The Republic of Ghana, The Republic of Sierra Leone, and the Federal Republic of Nigeria to improve the administrative, tactical, and operational capabilities of the men and women of the AFL.

The Armed Forces of Liberia continues to play significant role in the quest for peace and stability in Mali under the auspices of the United Nations Peacekeeping Operations Mission in Mali.

In February of 2018, the Armed Forces of Liberia (AFL) conducted two successive rotation exercises to reach a total of five rotations since the beginning of the Mission.

A total of one hundred personnel have been deployed, bringing the present strength of our troops to 105 personnel. During the period under review, the AFL Engineering Command collaborated with the Ministry of Public Works to undertake numerous road construction projects aimed at improving its civil-military relationship by engaging in civil works. In 2017, the Engineering Command completed the reconditioning of more than 300 kilometers of feeder roads in collaboration with the Ministry of Public Works.

As part of post-conflict security sector reforms, the Liberian National Defense Act of 2008 included provisions to re-establish the Liberian Coast Guard. With assistance from the United States government, the Liberian Coast Guard was fully reactivated and partially equipped to conduct maritime security and safety operations.

MADAM VICE PRESIDENT, MR. SPEAKER, MR. PRESIDENT PRO-TEMPORE, HONORABLE MEMBERS OF THE 54TH LEGISLATURE:

In an effort to take government closer to the people, The Ministry of Internal Affairs launched the National Policy on Decentralization and Local Governance. The central goal of this new approach is to provide basic social services to our people.

The newly-enacted Local Government Act of 2018 will now guide the national progress of decentralization of power, whereby authority, functions, and responsibilities will shift from central government to local governments.

MADAM VICE PRESIDENT, MR. SPEAKER, MR. PRESIDENT PRO-TEMPORE, HONORABLE MEMBERS OF THE 54TH LEGISLATURE:

Liberia continues to foster friendly and mutually beneficial ties with her traditional partners as well as explore new relations with countries sharing similar world views based on friendship, peace and cooperation in pursuit of her national interest.

Liberia continues to pursue a foreign policy objective based on the principles of sovereignty, equality and non-interference in the internal affairs of other states. The cultivation of friendly ties with member states of the international organizations and the settlement of disputes through dialogue and negotiations took center stage in the international arena.

During the period under review, I made Official and State visits to several countries in the interest of Liberia, and consulted with my colleagues on a number of issues of importance to Africa, notably the resolution of conflicts on the African continent and elsewhere. Most notable among my travels were the following:

January 28 - 30, 2018: I attended the 30th ordinary summit of Heads of State of the African Union in Addis Abba, Ethiopia. This was my first official travel as President of Liberia and my first attendance at the African Union.

February 14 -17, 2018: I paid a State Visit to the Republic of Senegal. This landmark visit to the President of Senegal reinvigorated the bilateral relations between Liberia and Senegal. My counterpart, President Macky Sall, and I discussed various areas of bilateral cooperation, particularly in the areas of fisheries, medicine, carpentry training, investment promotion, as well as Senegalese experience in the implementation of economic and social development programs.

... Cont'd from page 12

**ANNUAL MESSAGE**

February 16 – 20, 2018: I made an Official Visit to the Republic of France where the French President committed a grant of Ten million Euros to Liberia for road maintenance. I was also given the opportunity, along with President Macron, to serve as a co-founder of Sports for Development. Modalities are being worked out for a more comprehensive and sustainable development assistance to Liberia.

June 1 – 7, 2018: I attended the 12th edition of the European Development Forum on International Cooperation and Development held in Brussels, Belgium.

July 29 - August 1, 2018: I attended the 53rd Summit of the Authority of Heads of State and Government of ECOWAS in Lomé, Togo.

August 27 - September 6, 2018: I led a high-powered delegation to attend the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC) Summit in Beijing, China. During this visit, the Government of Liberia and China signed a \$54 million United States dollar grant to Liberia to aid the construction of two overhead bridges to ease traffic movement at the Ministerial Complex and the SKD Boulevard respectively.

I would like to inform this August body that Liberia has signed a Memorandum of Understanding enabling us to become a member of the One Belt One Road Initiative.

All of these indicate the strength of Liberia-China Relations. In this spirit, we reconfirm our commitment to upholding the One China Policy which governs our relations.

September 18 - October 4, 2018: I attended the 73rd Session of the United Nations General Assembly for the first time as President of the Republic of Liberia. I had the opportunity to address the General Assembly and also attended a high-level meeting on the world drug problem that was chaired by President Donald Trump of the United States. I also attended a high-level plenary meeting on global peace in honor of the 100th birth anniversary of Nelson Mandela.

November 9 – 15, 2018: At the invitation of the President of France, I paid an Official Visit to the Republic of France to attend the Paris Peace Forum which brought together more than Seventy (70) world leaders. During the occasion, had the opportunity to meet other world leaders.

While in France, I was invited to attend the Internet Governance Forum organized by the United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) as a Guest of Honor.

In my submission I highlighted the significance of Internet in bridging communication gaps in the world, as well as called attention to the dangers of the misuse of this new technology for both countries and their citizens.

**HONORABLE MEMBERS OF THE 54TH LEGISLATURE**

It is noteworthy to report that Liberia's relation with the United States is cordial, harmonious and mutually fruitful. Both countries enjoy strong relationship which is characterized by mutual respect. America is a traditional ally of Liberia and both countries continue to collaborate at the bilateral and multilateral levels, which led to a recent and significant signing of a \$120 Million United States dollars grant between USAID and Government.

MADAM VICE PRESIDENT, MR. SPEAKER, MR. PRESIDENT PRO-TEMPORE, HONORABLE MEMBERS OF THE 54TH LEGISLATURE:

During the reporting period, several officials, former officials of Government and prominent citizens ended their earthly journey for eternal rest. Among those for whom official Gazettes were issued were:

1. Hon. Lemuel E. A. Reeves, Sr.  
Former Commissioner General, Acting Commissioner General and Deputy Commissioner for Naturalization, respectively, Bureau of Immigration and Naturalization, now Liberia Immigration Service
2. Hon. Jacob Hilary Mason Sr. - Former Deputy Minister for Administration, Ministry of Agriculture
3. Amb. Famatta Rose OSODE  
Former Minister and Deputy Permanent Representative to the United Nations, Minister Counselor, Counselor, Deputy Permanent Representative/Minister Plenipotentiary, Charge d' Affaires
4. Hon Jackson E. Doe  
Former Minister of Post and Telecommunications, Transport and Presidential Affairs
5. Hon. Sandei A. Cooper, Sr.  
Former Deputy Governor, Central Bank of Liberia; Senior Vice President for Operation, Erstwhile Citi Bank; Treasurer and Chief Financial Officer respectively.
6. Cllr. Francis Y.S.M. Garlawolu  
Former Minister and Attorney General, Ministry of Justice, Republic of Liberia; Dean and Former Senator of Bong County
7. Hon. A. Francis Kpangbai  
Former Representative, 51st Legislature, Bong County; Procurement Officer, Peace Corps; Land Commissioner, Ministry of Lands, Mines and Energy, Bong County
8. Chief. Joseph T. K. Vonleh  
Former Paramount Chief, Chief Elder, Clan Chief, Respectively; Ministry of Internal Affairs, Republic of Liberia
9. Hon. Alfred Boimah Anderson, Jr.  
Former Superintendent, Bomi County; Former Board Member, Bomi Community, College and Radio Bomi, respectively, Educator, Humanitarian, Prominent Citizen
10. Rev. Dr. Emmanuel W. Johnson

Superintendent, Monrovia Consolidated School System, President, Cuttington College and Divinity School.

MADAM VICE PRESIDENT AND PRESIDENT OF THE SENATE, MR. SPEAKER, MR. PRESIDENT PRO-TEMPORE AND HONORABLE MEMBERS OF THE 54TH LEGISLATURE:

Long before the drafting and completion of the PADD, our administration started immediate implementation with the Recast Fiscal Year 17/18 National Budget. With the re-balancing, we were able to generate \$9.6 million United States dollars in savings through expenditure cuts, including reductions in the salaries of all top-level government officials.

These included cabinet ministers, deputy and assistant ministers, heads of autonomous agencies and their deputies and assistants.

I am pleased to inform you, Honorable Members of the 54th Legislature, that today, no member of my cabinet makes above US\$7,200 monthly as compared to monthly earnings of US\$15,000 to US\$20,000 in the past.

With your approval as Members of the National Legislature, we used these savings wisely to fund Thirteen (13) Pro-Poor Projects. Today, I am pleased to inform you that most of these deliverables, consisting of our first Pro-Poor programs and projects, have now been successfully completed.

Some of the major successful programs and projects include: digitizing the University of Liberia registration system; sending medical doctors abroad to specialize; feasibility study of the 14th Military Hospital; upgrade of JFK and provision of the roads maintenance and the payment of the Resettlement Action Plan. Additionally, a new Presidential Lounge is being constructed at RIA to accommodate visiting Heads of State.

In addition, three (3) new dedicated jetty lines were installed at the Petroleum Storage Terminal (PST) on Bushrod Island. Another major milestone in the PST rehabilitation and expansion project was achieved with the completion of Three (3) new storage tanks.

These tanks enable the Government to store more petroleum products.

In the face of rising global prices, the government has been able to reduce the basic prices of fuel on the Liberian market. Fuel prices have been reduced as follows: Gas: 3.70 reduce to 3.30 and AGO has been reduced from 3.95 cents to 3.70. Likewise, the price of an ordinary passport has been reduced by 10%, from \$50 to \$45.

MADAM VICE PRESIDENT AND PRESIDENT OF THE SENATE, MR. SPEAKER, MR. PRESIDENT PRO-TEMPORE AND HONORABLE MEMBERS OF THE 54TH LEGISLATURE:

As we kick start the infrastructure portion of the PADD through road construction, we also want to place a new emphasis on agriculture.

Our International Partners will agree with me that endless national and foreign resources have been and continue to be poured into Agriculture, yet returns on these investments are almost negligible.

**THIS WILL HAVE TO CHANGE!!**

Just as I am doing with the roads, I will directly get involved in the programs and practical implementation of agriculture development.

The sector accounts for more than seventy percent (70%) of household earnings.

Therefore, our Pro-Poor Agenda for Prosperity and Development can only be sustainably achieved through agriculture. We will craft new practical and realistic agriculture policies, incentivize the sector by providing access to credit, reducing tariffs on agriculture implements, and provide small machines, modern seeds and fertilizers.

As I said before, and continue to say, Liberia is open for business. Under this administration the private sector will be prioritized. With the passage of the new Special Economic Zone Law, we will create one-stop shop business zones for the private sector.

We have for long spoken about adding value to various raw materials to create more jobs, income and livelihood for our citizens. It is time we take practical action to make it happen.

As part of our strategies to begin value addition, especially for light manufacturing and processing.

Survey of the Buchanan port has already begun on land that is allocated for the establishment of an SPECIAL ECONOMIC ZONE, and in this fiscal year we work with our international partners to complete the feasibility studies.

While we try to roll out these new business opportunities, we will get directly involved in improving the business climate in Liberia.

I would like to take this time to thank all the foreign businesses operating in the country. In spite of various constraints, they continue to positively contribute to the economy in terms of revenue generations and job creations.

As part of this exercise Government will continue to addresses constraints and challenges faced by our business community and the private sector. In so doing, we intend to explore the possibility of the following:

We will shortly place before you, the Legislature, a proposed amendment to extend the time required to renew Resident Permits. In Liberia we have business people who have lived here for 30 to 50 years but have to renew resident permit every year. THIS WILL HAVE TO CHANGE! People who have already resided in Liberia for five years or more, without a criminal record, will be eligible.

The amendment will also propose that resident permit holders will no longer be required to obtain permits to re-enter the country.

We will also look into revising the requirement for annual renewal of work permits for a longer period.

Additionally, we will implement a Visa-upon-Arrival program, as well as the issuance of Tourist Visas.

... Cont'd from page 13

**ANNUAL MESSAGE**

MADAME VICE PRESIDENT, MEMBERS OF THE NATIONAL LEGISLATURE, MEMBERS OF THE CABINET, MEMBERS OF THE JUDICIARY, DISTINGUISHED MEMBERS OF THE CLERGY, OUR INTERNATIONAL PARTNERS HERE PRESENT, MEMBERS OF THE BUSINESS COMMUNITY, MEMBERS OF THE CIVIL SOCIETY, OUR TRADITIONAL LEADERS, MEMBERS OF THE FOURTH ESTATE, OFFICIALS AND OTHER MEMBERS OF GOVERNMENT HERE PRESENT, DISTINGUISHED LADIES AND GENTLEMEN, MY FELLOW LIBERIANS:

As I conclude this Report to you on the current State of the Nation, I want to again give thanks and praise to the Almighty God for the many blessings and protection He has accorded us during our first year of service to our People and Nation.

Let me use this occasion to commend all of our Cabinet Ministers and their Deputies, Heads of autonomous agencies and their Deputies, the technicians at the various ministries and autonomous agencies, our security forces, Honorable Members of the National Legislature, the Judiciary; and our traditional leaders, for your tireless efforts and support in bringing us thus far.

I applaud your great works and I am deeply grateful for all of your sacrifices and immense contribution to our Nation. As we embark upon this new journey of the second year of our tenure, I am looking forward to your total commitment, unflinching support, and unwavering efforts; as we work collectively in transforming the lives of our people for the better.

It will be remiss of me, if I did not recognize and commend our International and Development Partners, for their immense support and contributions to our Government during our first year of leadership.

We applaud them for standing with us; and we look forward to a renewed and strengthened partnership in moving our country to higher heights.

FELLOW CITIZENS,

It is a little over a year since we took on the mantle of leadership to transform your lives for the better. It was a journey of profound opportunities and endless possibilities. At the same time, it was a Herculean task filled with challenges. But I am grateful that we were able to sail safely through difficult times in our first year of Service to our people. Certainly, this could not have been possible without the help and guidance of the Almighty; but also due to your patience, sacrifices, collaboration and cooperation.

When we accepted the challenge to serve our People about a year ago, not only was it the dawn of a new era for our Nation; but an opportunity to right the wrongs, address the plights of our people, heal their wounds; and confront every challenge and obstacle that stood in the way of transforming the lives of the Liberian people for the better. Today, I can state with understandable pride, that we did not disappoint our people; neither did we fail them.

With the support from our two other branches of Government and our International Partners during the course of our first year in office, I can confidently state that Liberia is far better today under our leadership, than it was twelve months ago when we were entrusted with the mandate to serve our people. This is also because of the diligence and tenacity that we brought to the process. We were resolved for change, and we remained committed to that cause during our first year of service to our people.

AND SO TODAY, I STAND BEFORE YOU WITH CONFIDENCE, AND DECLARE THAT THE STATE OF OUR NATION IS STRONG, PEACEFUL, UNITED, STABLE, AND PROMISING, WITH GREAT PROSPECTS FOR A BETTER FUTURE FOR ALL!!  
Fellow Citizens:

Despite all of these achievements during our first year, we are not oblivious of the many challenges that lie ahead, neither are we concluding that we have reached our peak in addressing the issues that confront your livelihood. But I can assure you that we are more energetic and motivated than we have ever been.

We are committed to changing your lives and to leading this Country to a prosperous future of countless opportunities.

And that is why we have started our second year with a new mindset...a patriotic mindset geared towards total development, economic growth and empowerment.

WE WILL NOT REST UNTIL WE REACH OUR ZENITH.

WE WILL NOT REST UNTIL WE PAVE THAT LAST ROAD LEADING TO THE REMOTEST PART OF OUR COUNTRY.

We will not rest until prices of basic commodities are made affordable; and the equitable distribution of our national wealth is achieved.

We will not rest until we see improvements in every sector of our society.

FELLOW LIBERIANS, thank you for standing with us! Thank you for your prayers and support!

In closing, permit me to quote the immortal words of our beloved National Anthem:

In Union Strong, Success is Sure.

We cannot fail!!!

With God above, our rights to prove,

We will, over all, prevail

With heart, and hand, our Country's cause defending,

We'll meet the foe, with valor unpretending.

LONG LIVE LIBERIA, HAPPY LAND!!

A home of Glorious Liberty, By God's command.

A home of Glorious Liberty, By God's command.

MAY GOD BLESS THE WORKS OF OUR HANDS, AND SAVE THE STATE.

I THANK YOU.

**O-P-E-D**

By Ian Buruma

**The Trump Whisperer**

**N**EW YORK - There are a lot of oddballs in US President Donald Trump's entourage, but few are as odd - or as sinister - as 33-year-old Stephen Miller, Trump's senior policy adviser. Miller resembles a type on the far right that is more common in Europe than the US: young, slick, sharp-suited, even a trifle dandyish. He is a skilled rabble-rouser, whose inflammatory rhetoric against immigrants and refugees - "We're going to build that wall high and we're going to build it tall!" - drives the crowds at Trump rallies into a frenzy. One of his crowd-pleasing notions is that migrants will infect Americans with terrible diseases.

Miller plays to all of Trump's worst instincts: belligerent chauvinism, vindictive loathing of liberals, and hostility to minorities. His partisanship is extreme. In his own words: "Everything that is wrong with this country today, the people who are opposed to Donald Trump are responsible for!" He may actually believe this.

What is odd about Miller, among other things, is the seeming clash between his views on immigrants, refugees, and minorities and his personal background. He is a descendent of Jews who came to the United States after fleeing pogroms in Belorussia. He grew up in California. His parents were Democrats. But he was already reading far-right literature (anti-gun control magazines and the like) in high school and has since consorted with ideologues whose ideas are often hard to distinguish from anti-Semitism. Trump's speech last year commemorating Holocaust Remembrance Day failed even to mention Jews; some believe that Miller was the author.<sup>3</sup>

Miller calls himself a patriot. There is of course nothing unusual about Jews being American, French, British, Russian, or indeed German patriots. Nor is there any reason why Jews should not be conservative. Margaret Thatcher appointed several Jews to high office, prompting the former prime minister Harold MacMillan's sniffy remark that her cabinet contained "more Old Estonians than Old Etonians."

There are other Jews around Trump, too, apart from Miller. Trump appointed Gary Cohn as Director of the National Economic Council and made Steven Mnuchin his Treasury Secretary. Neither is a nativist. Cohn almost resigned last year when Trump defended violent white-supremacist mobs in Charlottesville, Virginia. He did resign this year, but in protest against the introduction of tariffs on steel imports. Like Mnuchin, Cohn believes in low taxes and unfettered free enterprise. (Jared Kushner can be left out of this discussion, because the only reason for his presence in the White House is his marriage to Trump's daughter, Ivanka.)

What is unusual is to be Jewish and a nativist (at least outside Israel). The Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung reported recently that a number of Jews had joined the anti-immigrant Alternative für Deutschland (AfD) party. Many of them seem to be of Russian descent. An exaggerated fear that Muslims are about to destroy the West appears to be their main motive for joining the far right. Miller is haunted by a similar apocalyptic vision. And there are others of this ilk: the casino magnate and major Trump supporter Sheldon Adelson, for example.

But there are sound reasons why Jews in the diaspora normally do not become nativists. Nativist movements that insist on the special privileges of blood and soil have invariably been bad for minorities, especially Jews, leading to the kind of violence that drove Miller's great-grandparents out of their country.

Some people find it puzzling that anti-Semites have accused Jews of being either archetypal Bolsheviks or archetypal capitalists. Historically, most Jews, living in poor villages, were neither. But the attraction of left-wing ideas for Jewish intellectuals is hardly mysterious. Karl Marx himself hoped that once the workers of the world united, ethnic and religious distinctions would cease to matter. And Voltaire, who was no great friend to the Jews, once remarked about the London stock exchange: "Here Jew, Mohammedan, and Christian deal with each other as though they were all of the same faith, and only apply the word infidel to people who go bankrupt..." Capitalism, as we know, transcends borders.

Emigration, by no means always voluntary, has been the fate of Jews since the 8th century BC. Open societies, religious tolerance, and freedom of movement have been rare blessings. Hence the traditional appeal of places like Amsterdam, or indeed the US. It explains why American Jews continue to vote largely for the Democratic Party, even after they became more prosperous. Norman Podhoretz, a conservative American intellectual, once wrote a book entitled *Why Are Jews Liberals?* He was baffled by the idea that, as his fellow conservative Milton Himmelfarb famously quipped, "Jews earn like Episcopalians and vote like Puerto Ricans."

But it isn't baffling at all. Distrust of nativism is the result of long and bloody experience. And now it underpins a growing disenchantment among American Jews with Israel. Nativism, stressing Jewish rights at the expense of the Arabs, is on the rise in the Holy Land, too. Although Israeli Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu invokes the Holocaust whenever it suits him, he is ideologically closer to evangelical Christian zealots and hard-right nativists like his Hungarian counterpart, Viktor Orbán, than he is to most Jewish Americans.

This is why, despite much talk of powerful Jewish lobbies in Washington, most Jews will continue to vote against Trump, even though he is an almost slavish supporter of the Israeli government and openly hostile to the Palestinians. It is also why Miller remains an oddball. Celebrating the Jewish new year, Rosh Hashanah, last month, Miller's former rabbi, Neil Comess-Daniels, denounced Miller's politics as "completely antithetical to everything I know about Judaism." I am not sure Jewish theology supports such a vehement assertion, but his sentiments are clear.

When William Kristol, a neo-conservative commentator who once flirted with the hard right, expressed his disgust with Trump, David Horowitz, one of Miller's mentors, called Kristol a "renegade Jew." Sigmund Freud would have called this "projection." In fact, the concept goes back at least as far as the Babylonian Talmud, which warned: "Do not taunt your neighbour with the blemish you yourself have."

# 16bn report due end of February

By Winston W. Parley

President George Manneh Weah says findings from investigation conducted by a London - based audit team over Liberia's alleged missing 16 billion local currency are due at the end of February this year, warning that anyone implicated will face the full weight of the law.

In his second State of the Nation Address on Capitol Hill Monday, 28 February, Mr. Weah told legislators that the report will be released to the public by USAID.

"If it is established that there has been any willful act of criminality, negligence or malfeasance by anyone implicated in the report, the full weight of the law will be brought to bear," he says amidst interruption from supporters cheering the Annual Address at the Capitol.

The alleged missing 16 billion report has rocked Liberia for much part of President Weah's first year in office in 2018, sparking a



populous campaign dubbed "Bring Back Our Money" which witnessed petitions to foreign diplomatic missions here, including the U.S. Embassy, the European Union and ECOWAS, among others.

Mr. Weah set up a local presidential investigative team, in addition to his request

extended to external investigators to come and help government probe claims of the alleged missing Liberian banknotes.

U.S. experts have helped with the investigation, while local investigators also conducted their own probe, but delays in releasing findings

into these investigations have in recent times generated fears in some quarters that these delays could lead to watering down the reports.

In his report to the Legislature Monday, Mr. Weah recalls that the news media in 2018 was circulated with reports of containers of money printed and imported into the country by the Central Bank of Liberia being allegedly missing.

Given the gravity of the allegations, he says his administration took several actions in response including setting up a special presidential technical committee to investigate.

He recalls that in addition, his government requested the assistance of the European Union, the African Union, the United States Government and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) to help in conducting a separate external investigation into the alleged missing money.

With the assistance and support of USAID, Mr. Weah says an audit team from London, England was invited to independently investigate and report the findings.

He says the report is due at the end of February, and it will be released by USAID. *-Edited by Othello B. Garblah*

## Waste of time

Barely minutes after President George Manneh Weah delivered his two hours address Monday, 28 January to members of the 54th Legislature on the state of the nation; four collaborating opposition political parties here brand the President's Annual Message as a "waste of time."

The opposition had promised to immediately and robustly respond to the President after he performed this constitutional mandate. Article 58 of the Constitution of Liberia requires the President to, on the fourth working Monday in January of each year, present the administration's legislative program for the ensuing session and shall once a year

report to the Legislature on the state of the Republic.

Monday's address was the second since President Weah assumed office on 22 January 2018.

But speaking at the headquarters of the opposition Liberty Party in Monrovia, immediately after the President's address, the national chairman of the former ruling Unity Party Wilmot Paye says the address portrays Liberia, a country whose economy is already in free fall, as being "better", saying "obviously, the President just does not care about how many of you sleep hungry, how many Liberians are barely surviving, and how grim the prospects are for this economy to recover in the foreseeable future."

The four collaborating political parties include; the former ruling Unity Party, Liberty Party (LP), the Alternative National Congress (ANC) and the All Liberian Party (ALP).

"The President and his officials have destroyed whatever was left of the economy after the Ebola crisis. Yet, while you waited to hear some meaningful policy prescriptions for resuscitating the bleeding economy, he said nothing substantive to rekindle our hopes, reassure businesses, ensure investor's confidence, and once more regain the respect of Liberia's bilateral and multilateral partners. This is what a serious leader would do in difficult times," Chairman Paye continues.

The opposition's statement claims the Weah administration does not seem to have the slightest idea of what to do in order to alleviate the suffering and hardship imposed on the country in one year, which it says will only continue to intensify.

"The President's message to the nation today was a waste of time because it failed to even hint at any concrete solution," Paye points out.

He says the message coming from the President has heightened fears and dampened whatever tinge of hope left as Liberians waited to hear any practical policy prescriptions on how to revamp the economy, return to good governance and avert

## Protest mars

Starts from back page

actions against rape in the country, saying since the Weah government got into power, Liberian women and girls have been victimized on a daily basis.

He accuses the government of not taking actions against perpetrators.

The campus - based political leader wants appropriate mechanism to be put in place to establish the War and Economic Crimes court here.

Kollie wants President Weah to give account to Liberians on how he acquired his estates and properties, while also asking all other government officials to publicly declare their assets to the General Auditing Commission.

For his part, the Secretary General of the Militant Bureau of UL Mr. Austin G. Saweleh says the Constitution doesn't give the President the right to close classes.

Saweleh who led the battle cry on the University of Liberia Campus says they weren't informed that classes would have been suspended Monday.

Austin also says their protest is a wakeup call for President Weah to know that he is obligated to pay their school fees.

He laments that there are a lot of benefits on campus that they are not getting because the tuitions are not paid.-- *Edited by Winston W. Parley*

### #Stop prioritizing foreign businesses over Liberian businesses!#

further financial disasters that still lie ahead.

"We must act with some urgency to prevent the situation from degenerating into a humanitarian catastrophe. This has validated previous doubts about his [President Weah's] capacity to [lead]. We do not think you should continue to take him seriously at all. The President failed to assuage Liberians," he adds.

According to the statement, President Weah and his "cronies" are celebrating while businesses are closing down, food prices are soaring and job prospects for young people leaving colleges and universities grow dimmer, gloomier and grimmer.

He argues the government announced a tuition-free policy for all public universities and colleges, but one should

visit public institutions and community colleges across the country, noting there are no basic instructional materials.

He says because the administration has no moral compunction, it does not care about plight of the people, and President Weah allegedly failed disastrously to soothe a hungry population, needless to say assure or reassure Liberians.

"He presented no panacea for salvaging this economy, and gave no clear direction on where the nation is headed. Simply put, what the President just delivered is an Annual Mess-Age; it lacks substance and this is not what the Constitution prescribes," the statement concludes. *(Read full text beginning on page 4). -Editing by Jonathan Browne*



# Protest mars annual message



By Ethel A. Tweh

The grounds of the University of Liberia (UL) Capitol Hill Campus turned into a battle ground on Monday, 28 January, when protesting students chanted: “No School, no Annual Message” ahead of President George Manneh Weah’s second State of the Nation Address at the Legislature.

Some UL students have been planning to stage protest during President Weah’s State of the Nation Address following

a ban on all student political activities on campus.

Normal activities were stalled on the campus and in places closed to the Capitol, as heavy security presence was felt ahead of Mr. Weah’s address before the lawmakers.

The protest brought together the Students Unification Party (SUP) and the Militant Bureau of the University of Liberia.

SUP Standard Martin Kollie says their protest will not end until their needs are meant.

Mr. Kollie is demanding

Government to lift the ban on student politics at UL, saying nowhere in the history of the university has this ever happened to students politics.

Martin also says the report of the missing \$16 Billion needs to be out now. Further, he calls on Finance Minister Samuel Tweah to give account on the US\$25 million that was allegedly infused into the Liberian market to mop up excess liquidity.

Mr. Kollie indicates that there should be immediate



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# Vacancy

The Management of the New Dawn is in search of a suitably qualified IT person to manage its website.

Managing the website would include among others, uploading stories and adverts, ensuring proper content, monitoring followers, facebook, designing online adverts and keeping the site very interesting and

interactive. Candidate must preferably have experience in working in a media environment, be multitask-oriented, willing to work under pressure and for long hours.

Interested candidate (s) may submit application along with relevant professional credentials from a recognized IT institution to the New Dawn Office on Crown Hill, Broad Street, adjacent Afriland Bank Liberia (Limited).

The Management

## The NewDawn Press

We Offer The Following Printing Services:

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- Brochures, Letterhead
- Receipts, Invoices
- Souvenirs, Gifts
- Designs, etc...

2 colors Heidelberg printing machines

Notice is hereby given that the trademarks detailed herein are published pursuant to Section 10.6 (d) of the Liberia Intellectual Property Act approved June 14, 2016, and Published by Authority on July 22, 2016.

Trademark Application No.	Names & Address of Applicant	Date of Application	Symbol of Mark	Classes & List of Goods	Agent
AP/M/2019/00002	National Hardware center, Vai Town, Bushrod Island, Monrovia, Liberia	January 8, 2019		International Class 04	Atty. Bruce W. Quaye, Monrovia, Liberia