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CMYK



Continental News

Zimbabwe doctors protest at unionist's 'abduction'

Hundreds of doctors have marched through the Zimbabwean capital, Harare, to condemn the alleged abduction of their union leader. Peter Magombeyi had organised a series of strikes over poor pay and working conditions in recent weeks.

On Saturday, he sent a WhatsApp message alleging he had been kidnapped by three men. He has not been seen since. The doctors, many of them wearing white lab coats, waved placards and chanted slogans during Monday's march. They said they would not return to work until Mr Magombeyi, the acting president of the Zimbabwe Hospital Doctors Association (ZHDA), was found. It marked the second consecutive day that doctors had staged a walkout. Some chanted "no Peter, no work" and "bring back Peter" as they made their way through the streets of the capital. The protesters had planned to march to President Emmerson Mnangagwa's office, but they were prevented from doing so

by a line of riot police.

A few of the group's leaders were allowed through the barricade so they could present a petition to the president demanding action to find Mr Magombeyi and improve working conditions. The doctors believe Mr Magombeyi was abducted by the security forces because of his role in organising recent strike

action. A government spokesman, Nick Mangwana, denied this was the case and said the administration had "no reason" to abduct Zimbabweans. "Acts of terror are ultimately threats to the security of the state," he wrote on Twitter. "There is no rhyme nor reason for the state to undermine itself." Shortly before he disappeared, Mr Magombeyi told AFP news

agency he had received threatening calls and messages on his phone. Police say they are investigating the case. They also said, without evidence, that there is a possibility Mr Magombeyi's disappearance was an attempt to tarnish the country's reputation. The economic crisis in Zimbabwe has meant doctors' salaries have shrunk to just \$100 (£80) a month. Many cannot afford to get to work as it costs around \$80 to fill up a car with petrol.

"When we go to work, it's difficult as we lack the basics to perform effectively," one doctor, Busi Mlambo, told AFP. "Now we don't even feel safe in

our own homes." "We can't build a united nation when our doctors are underpaid [and] abducted when they raise legitimate concerns," opposition leader Nelson Chamisa said on Twitter. In recent weeks, there has been a spate of abductions in Zimbabwe by those who are seen as critical of the government. Comedian Samantha Kureya, known by her stage name Gonyeti, was abducted and beaten up in August by armed men who, she said, told her she was "too young to mock them". The government denied any involvement in her abduction. BBC



The march was the second consecutive day of protest action organised by the doctors

\$1bn pledge for West African security

West African leaders have pledged \$1bn (£805m) over five years, starting in 2020, to combat Islamist militancy in the region, but some are sceptical it will lead to improved security.

"The enlargement of the circle of countries concerned by the Sahelian crisis is certainly welcomed yet the solutions proposed are

exactly the same as those heard for years, which have failed repeatedly," Yvan Guichaoua, lecturer in International Conflict Analysis at the University of Kent, told the BBC. Initial media reports suggest that half of the money could come from the West African Economic and Monetary Union, a grouping of the region's French-speaking countries and Guinea-Bissau. The other half could

come directly from member states of the West African regional body, Ecowas, along with Mauritania and Chad, both of which have been attacked by militant groups.

But it's unclear how much each country would contribute to the fund and whether they will look for donors from outside the region.

"For now I haven't seen evidence of either firm commitments or mechanisms to collect that money," said Andrew Lebovich, doctoral candidate in African History at Columbia University. "The more serious issues are political - namely disagreements over how to deploy and staff any joint force, where to deploy it, and even an analysis of how best to tackle the insecurity in the region," said Mr Lebovich.

In the past four years, there have been 2,200 attacks by various militant groups in the region which have left 11,500 dead and millions of people displaced. The region's security forces have been struggling to contain the threat from Islamist groups, some of which



There is a mosaic of organisations and countries involved in fighting militants in the region

Rwanda says Uganda is illegally holding 200 of its citizens



Rwanda says more than 200 of its citizens are being illegally detained in Uganda. Delegations from the two neighbouring countries have been holding discussions in the Rwandan capital, Kigali, to work towards resolving political and security tensions.

The meeting followed an agreement signed by the two countries' presidents in Angola a month ago. Uganda has agreed to review the list of alleged detainees, provide due process, and release those who are found to have committed no crime. Relations between the two countries have been strained at different times over the past two decades. The latest spat has lasted for most of this year and led to Rwanda

closing its side of the common border in February. One of the problems has been accusations by Rwanda that Uganda is holding hundreds of its citizens illegally, as well as sheltering dissidents. Uganda has also accused Rwanda of training and deploying spies to its territory.

The delegations from both countries agreed to discuss the issue of free movement of people and goods at their next meeting in the Ugandan capital, Kampala in a month, an indication that the border may remain closed for the time being. The two East African countries are closely interlinked, and there is a considerable population of Rwandan descent in Uganda. BBC

are linked to the Islamic State group or al-Qaeda. This is due, in part, to a lack of resources, despite support from the UN, international forces (mainly the French) and two regional joint forces (G5 Sahel and the Multinational Joint Taskforce). Governments have been saying that they need more money to bolster and better equip their armies, but some argue that too much focus on defence spending could have negative effects.

The charity Oxfam said in a statement that Ecowas should be looking more into political solutions, ones that address deepening inequalities and growing demands for improved justice. Niger's president said during the summit that the international community needed to "take responsibility" for the Libya crisis, which he, and others, argue is at the root of instability in the Sahel. BBC

EDITORIAL

The Church must speak

THE ONCE POWERFUL voice of the Church in Liberia has frozen. The Liberia Council of Churches that spoke truth to power in the 80s has gone silent, leaving the state without guidance.

IT IS NOT only regrettable but very sadden that traditional leaders and zoes are the ones now giving direction to the government, while the Church is asleep.

WE RECALL THE days of the late Catholic Archbishop Michael Kpakala Francis, Episcopal Bishop George D. Browne and retired Methodist Bishop Arthur F. Kula when the LCC served as voice of the people, pointing out and condemning ills of society.

BUT THIS IS no more. The current Council of Churches appears to have turned blind eyes on unfolding developments in the country, leaving citizens with no one to turn to for hope.

THE VICES PLAGUING our beloved country are enormous and need remedies. They range from ex-rebel generals becoming state actors, US\$25 million of our national reserves misappropriated, excess printing of Liberian banknotes and flooding the market to widespread rape and killings, electoral violence and a stagnant economy that has strangulated the people, among others.

THESE EXCESSES ARE traceable from the past administration and exacerbated by the highly inept Weah administration that wallops in arrogance and exceptional greed.

AMID THE ILLS, the Church is conspicuously silent. The nation yearns for prayers, healing and spiritual guidance. The zoes and chiefs are filling the gaps created by the silence of the voice of conscious.

THE NATION IS in search of direction. But the messengers of God are sitting and watching, while the people burn with thirst and hopelessness. The LCC has become so diplomatic that it now minds its own business, for fear of not rocking the boat.

WHO WILL SPEAK for the suffering masses? Greedy and dishonest politicians are having a feed day, giving false hopes to drowning Liberians. God is watching! The Church should get ready to account for its inactions.

WE URGE THE LCC to muster the courage enough to tell President Weah that it's time to set up a war and economic crimes court for Liberia to implement recommendations of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. This would not only end impunity, but serve as deterrence to would-be war mongers.

The New Dawn
TRULY INDEPENDENT

COMMENTARY

By Jasmine M. El-Gamal

Is Arab Unity Dead?

US President Donald Trump's disdain for multilateralism makes it even more likely that Arab governments will continue cooperating with regional allies on key issues rather than trying to reach a broader consensus within the Arab League and the Gulf Cooperation Council. And the already slim prospects for Arab unity will fade even further.

BEIRUT - Historically, the task of promoting multilateralism in the Middle East has rested with two institutions: the League of Arab States, a broad alliance for collaboration on political, economic, and cultural issues, and the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), which deals mainly with economic matters. Despite the differences in their history, focus, and membership, both bodies were intended to serve as vehicles for ensuring Arab unity on crucial issues - such as opposing Israel - and avoiding conflict among member states.¹

For decades, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict rallied Arab countries around the common cause of supporting Palestinian statehood. But since the 2011 Arab Spring uprisings, three far more divisive issues have come to the fore: the perceived threat posed by Iran, the spread of regional terrorism, and the rise of political Islam (or Islamism).

These developments have ruptured traditional alliances and created much more fluid patterns of multilateral cooperation in the region. And current Western policy toward the Middle East - in particular that of the United States - is likely to reinforce this trend.

First, Sunni Arab governments regard Iran's regional influence and activities as a fundamental threat to their interests. The increasingly hostile rivalry between Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates on the one hand, and Iran on the other, has thus eclipsed these countries' traditional shared opposition toward Israel. Indeed, a number of Arab governments are working on an unprecedentedly close basis with Israel to address the Iranian threat. This cooperation, which had largely taken place behind the scenes, burst into the open in February 2019 at the US-led "anti-Iran" conference in Warsaw, which Israeli Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu hailed as a breakthrough in Arab-Israeli relations. These ties will likely grow stronger as Saudi Arabia and Iran continue their strategic competition and proxy confrontation in the region.

Second, the threat of jihadist terrorism throughout the Middle East has aggravated by the violent conflicts in Syria and Libya and has since manifested itself in multiple attacks in Egypt, Tunisia, Jordan, and other countries, has strained the Arab League and turned its member states against one another. After Libya's then-ruler Muammar el-Qaddafi violently quelled a popular uprising in his country in early 2011, for example, the League suspended Libya from the organization and actively supported Qaddafi's ouster by NATO and Libyan rebel forces later that year.

Soon after, Arab League members denounced Syrian President Bashar al-Assad for enabling terrorism in the region, and expelled Syria from the body. Today, the League is divided over Syria's membership. Several Sunni Arab states are strongly opposed, arguing that Assad has allowed Iran to expand its influence in the region and empower Shia militias, such as Hezbollah in Lebanon, that pose a direct threat to their regimes. The Iraqi and Tunisian governments, however, have publicly called for Syria to be re-admitted.

Finally, the rise of political Islam in the wake of the Arab Spring - including the popular election of Islamists in countries such as Egypt and Tunisia - has reinforced regional divisions. Fearful of the Islamist surge, the authorities in Egypt, Saudi Arabia, and the UAE launched an unrelenting and coordinated effort to stem the rising influence of groups such as the Muslim Brotherhood in the region. The most dramatic example of this was the Egyptian military's forcible overthrow in 2013 of Mohamed Morsi, a Brotherhood member who was the country's first democratically elected president. Arab countries were divided over Morsi's ouster, with Saudi Arabia and the UAE supporting the move and Qatar staunchly opposing it.

These three issues have not only fractured the Arab League, but also have split the economically focused GCC. Most notably, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, the UAE, and non-GCC member Egypt have imposed a political and economic blockade on Qatar since 2017, claiming that the latter supports terrorism in the region and allows its capital, Doha, to serve as a safe haven for exiled Islamists. Qatar's close ties with Turkey and Iran are also a source of regional tension.

The collapse of traditional multilateralism in the Middle East has coincided with a marked shift in America's approach to the region under President Donald Trump. His predecessor, Barack Obama, strongly favored multilateralism and coalition-building, which enabled the 2015 Iran nuclear deal and the earlier NATO-led military intervention in Libya. Trump, by contrast, proudly proclaims his disdain for multilateral institutions and prefers to deal with like-minded partners (as well as adversaries) on a bilateral basis. Furthermore, his staunch opposition to Iran has led him to align the US fully with the anti-Iran bloc in the region.

The Trump administration's approach makes it all the more likely that Arab governments will continue cooperating with specific regional allies on key issues rather than trying to reach a broader consensus within the Arab League and the GCC. And the prospects for Arab unity, already slim, will fade even further.

O-PED

By Kandeh K. Yumkella

Energy, Employment, and Migration in Africa

FREETOWN, SIERRA LEONE - Africans are increasingly unsettled. Since 2010, at least one million Sub-Saharan Africans have migrated to Europe, and the number migrating to the United States has also risen. These trends have spurred considerable political anxiety in destination countries. Yet efforts to address a major factor driving this exodus - the lack of employment opportunities in Africa - are failing to yield significant results.

The African Development Bank (AfDB) estimates that, unless stronger action is taken now, 100 million young Africans will be unemployed in 2030. To avoid such a scenario, the Africa-Europe Alliance for Sustainable Investment and Jobs, established last year by the European Union and African governments, aims to provide resources for education and skills training, strengthen the business environment and the private sector, and improve investment conditions.

Similarly, over the next decade, the AfDB's Jobs for Youth in Africa initiative is supposed to equip 50 million young people with marketable skills, and to create 25 million jobs. Most of that employment will be in agriculture, where growth, the World Bank reports, is 2-4 times more effective in raising incomes among the poorest people than growth in other sectors.

To tap this potential, AfDB President Akinwumi Adesina has called for turning rural areas "from zones of economic misery to zones of economic prosperity," which requires "new agricultural innovations" and the transformation of agriculture into "a sector for creating wealth." Given that Africa has the world's youngest population - 60% of the continent's inhabitants are under the age of 35 - this transformation also requires making agriculture "a really cool choice for young people."

Already, 70% of Africa's youth reside in rural areas and work in agriculture, which is expected to be a trillion-dollar industry by 2030. The AfDB hopes to take advantage of this to foster a cohort of "agripreneurs," and has invested nearly \$1 billion in this goal since 2016. Small and growing businesses currently account for just one-fifth of jobs in emerging economies, compared to three-fifths in the developed countries.

But there is a major barrier to agricultural development in Africa: scaling up any industry requires reliable, uninterrupted electricity, which much of rural Africa - home to more than 600 million people - does not have. Fortunately, there is a way to close this gap and create millions more jobs that reduce so-called distress migration: fully embrace and accelerate the development of Africa's nascent distributed renewable-energy industry.

According to a new report by Power for All, an industry advocacy group, distributed renewable energy in Africa - which includes mini-grids and solar infrastructure for households, businesses, and productive purposes like irrigation - already directly employs as many workers as traditional power utilities. These jobs are largely "sticky" - two-thirds are full-time and long-term - and the majority are high-skill positions that command middle-level incomes. Young people aged 18-25 form about 40% of the total rural-electrification workforce.

Africa's distributed renewable-energy industry is just getting started. By 2022-23, the number of jobs in the industry is expected to double in Kenya and soar more than tenfold in Nigeria. According to one recent projection, off-grid solar alone could create 1.3 million full-time-equivalent jobs across East, West, and Central Africa, as well as South Asia, by 2022. Previous estimates suggest that, by 2030, the off-grid renewable-energy value chain could generate at least 4.5 million jobs, including entrepreneurs, technicians, distributors, and installers.

And that is only direct employment. According to the Powering Jobs report, for every job created directly by a private firm delivering electricity to rural communities via decentralized renewables, five "productive use" jobs (based on the application of a distributed renewable-energy product or service) may be created in the communities being electrified. This would include, for example, jobs in solar-powered milling, dairy processing, or cold chain storage facilities.

Yet creating jobs is just the first step; workers also have to be able to fill them. And, as the Powering Jobs report showed, Africa's skills gap - in terms of both hard and soft skills (including in middle management) - is growing. The right technical, marketing, financial, and management capabilities are essential.

African governments and their donors and partners are already committed to investing in skills-building and job creation. Given the implications for employment, development, and migration, there is a strong case for channeling a significant share of that investment toward Africa's distributed renewable-energy industry.

OPINION

By Manuel Muñiz & Marietje Schaake

An Innovation Agenda for Europe

BRUSSELS/MADRID - The European Union's new leadership team must reform and deepen the bloc and strengthen its global influence. Making Europe much more innovative should therefore be at the top of the priority list.

There is no time to waste. The rapid growth of the digital economy is creating a technological G2 world dominated by the United States and China, with Europe a distant third. Not even one European firm is ranked among the world's largest Internet companies. Most technology "unicorns" - privately held start-ups valued at over \$1 billion - are outside the EU. And tech hubs such as Shenzhen or Silicon Valley currently dwarf anything that Europe has to offer.

If EU leaders allow these trends to continue, Europe will find itself unable to meet the geostrategic challenges of the twenty-first century. An outdated industrial and technological base will be unable to support a resilient and effective data infrastructure, and will thus limit Europe's strategic autonomy. With technology and innovation having become important arenas for Sino-American great-power rivalry, Europe must raise its collective game to avoid being caught in the middle.

There are also strong economic reasons for Europe to act with greater urgency. For starters, companies that make heavy use of technology are known to be more productive and competitive. The OECD estimates that the most productive of these companies - what it calls "frontier firms" - accounted for almost all of the productivity growth in advanced economies during the past decade. Such companies also create most of the high-quality and high-paying jobs in a modern economy. If too much of Europe's corporate sector remains low-tech and uncompetitive, its workforce will face an increasingly precarious future, and the best and brightest employees may move to other parts of the world.

Moreover, an unproductive private sector generates lower tax revenues. Without enough profitable firms and high-paying jobs, governments across Europe will face funding challenges and additional pressure on public budgets.

Given the high stakes for Europe of being either a digital leader or laggard, the EU urgently needs a radically ambitious innovation and technology agenda. This should be a long-term effort in which stronger cooperation among European partners plays a central role.

We foresee three strategic priorities. First, Europe must build an ecosystem of universities and research centers that can attract talent from around the world. These clusters, like those that underpin every major global innovation hub, would not only provide world-class training, but also generate applied knowledge that can be transformed into high-impact companies and projects.

In particular, Europe needs academic institutions that bring together the best minds from the research world, industry, the financial sector, and the entrepreneurial community. Such institutions should measure their success by the number of start-ups that are launched in their incubators, the number of jobs created by their spin-offs, and their overall contribution to local, regional, and national economic growth. Unless this shift occurs, Europe's academic infrastructure will not be fit for purpose in the twenty-first century.

Second, the EU must complete the digital single market in order to encourage greater innovation. Digital markets need to be large to be successful, yet Europe is still fragmented by unnecessary barriers. Innovative digital firms that want to operate across the EU must navigate numerous regulations and norms that make it harder for them to scale up, hindering their competitiveness.

US and Chinese technology companies are thriving in large part because they have huge domestic markets that enable the growth they need to expand internationally. EU leaders must therefore double down on deepening European integration and expanding markets through multilateral cooperation. Furthermore, the EU's trade agreements should include standard chapters on digital trade in order to ensure a level playing field both at home and abroad.

Third, the EU must remain alert to malpractice and competition challenges in the digital economy. Digitalization has produced winner-take-all markets, and the digital economy contains strong oligopolistic forces. Firms that have access to data and the capacity to process it tend to fare better than those that do not. The clearest sign of growing market concentration may be the lack of diffusion of productivity gains from frontier firms to others. Wage stagnation, the declining share of wages in national income, and the weakening of collective-bargaining procedures also point to a lack of market competition.

The EU is obliged to ensure free and fair competition within its markets. Having introduced its General Data Protection Regulation in 2018 to give EU citizens more control over their personal data, Europe's leaders must continue to ensure that the rule of law applies online as well as offline, and that competition in the digital economy is fair. Such a values-driven or norms-compliant approach to innovation would benefit Europeans and people around the world.

Europe has the human capital, infrastructure, institutional capacity, and financial and corporate resources to be a global leader in technology and innovation. With bold, swift action, the EU's new leaders can build a model that creates ripple effects around the world. And instead of being an innovation laggard, Europe could become an example for others to follow.

ARTICLE

ARTICLE

How We (UP) lost the Elections in 2017(A reminder)

[Second Part of "Comedy of Errors," published in theperspective.org, October 2017.]

My friend-in-politics from "way back" shook my hands ten different ways before hugging me and saying, "You and your Boss gave us George Weah, now we are stranded again! You guys thought this man can run a country... Why?" We laughed. It was a joke because we had both worked for President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, but once he joined the VP. Joseph N. Boakai Campaign, we lost contact and whenever I was able to reach him by phone, he would always state: "I am in a meeting, will call back." It got to a point that one day, he told me he was in Nimba while I could clearly see him in the car in front of me, on the By-Pass. But in May 2019, long after the dust has settled on presidential campaign, we sat under a Palava hut and shared a meal. Our break in communication inside the administration was symptomatic of what led to the loss of the 2017 elections.

I was asked the same question repeatedly, by everyone from everywhere. From Paynesville to Abidjan to New York and Washington, DC as well as in Nimba, the same question was posed to me. How could a ruling party, with good human right records, good partnerships around the world, and an iconic female leader lose an election? Almost two years have gone by. How did we get here?

My friend argued that "If Ellen had supported Uncle Joe (Vice President Joseph Boakai) Weah would have never won." There was a well-established belief in many quarters among Liberians and non-Liberians that President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf could have stopped George Weah from winning the elections. But it wasn't that simple.

I first talked to VP Joe Boakai about his candidacy early 2014. He wanted to run but wasn't sure how to bring it up with the President. He spoke about pressure from some party members as well as people from Lofa who wanted him to run to carry the torch left burning by the late VP Harry Moniba. President Sirleaf had promised in 2011 that she and VP. Boakai would leave UP in the hands of the next generation in 2017. His desire to run was breaking that promise. While still pondering on how to break the news to the President, he went to Lofa, and was petitioned to run and he accepted. Informing the President even harder. In the end, it was Hon. Morris Dukuly who served as messenger between the two: to tell President Sirleaf that VP Boakai wants to run and to VP Boakai Joe that President Sirleaf had no problem with it and would support him.

President Sirleaf often said that although her name would not be on the ballot, her legacy would be the central theme of the campaign, with one group coming in to dismantle it and another group who would want to build on it. She was aware that Mr. Boakai was the only one who could safeguard her legacy and not blame her for the failings of the government.

I had my first conversation with President Sirleaf about her succession in March 2013. We were in Abuja for the launching of the Common African Position on the Post-2015, which she chaired. I asked her during a break if she was giving any thought to 2017. She enumerated many potential "good" candidates. She put them in order of preference and wasn't sure if the VP would run. After talking about each of them, she said, "but if Joe [VP Boakai] decides to run, that will change everything. We will have to make sure he wins."

President Sirleaf asked VP Boakai at some point if he wanted to run on the record of the UP administration or take a distance. VP Boakai said he would run on the legacy of the UP administration. When the Liberia Action Party (LAP) - led by Cllr. Varney Sherman - joined UP in 2010, the agreement was that (UP) Ellen would pick a vice presidential candidate from LAP for the subsequent elections (2011). However, after the deal was signed, at the Convention, Mrs. Sirleaf decided to stick with Mr. Boakai. Her argument was summed in a football parlance: "One does not break up a winning team." She pushed further that if elected for a second term, she and Boakai will lay the groundwork for the next UP generation and retire. Thus, the famous

"generational change" slogan among UP younger politicians.

However, things started to disintegrate in 2014, when Mr. Robert Sirleaf, son of the President decided to run for a senate seat in Montserrado County where he ended up losing to Mr. George Weah. Although President Sirleaf had little to say in Mr. Sirleaf's decision - he sued her and the government over electoral issues - UP blamed her and accused her of being "enemy of the party," along with her son.

The other shoe dropped with the indictment of Senator Varney Sherman, former Chairman of UP, in the Sable Mining corruption saga. This led to a further deterioration of the relationship between the two leaders of the UP. Mr. Sherman had grown close to the Vice President - both working in Capitol Hill - and until the indictment, there was an assumption that VP. Boakai would pick Mr. Sherman or someone from the former LAP faction as running mate. Cllr Sherman also had his ambitions, expecting President Sirleaf to retire with Mr. Boakai and hand to him a well-rounded state machine. Several others wanted to run but ended up joining Mr. Boakai or moving to different parties.

VP Boakai cut short a foreign trip to "assess the situation." The Chairman of the Party, Mr. Wilmot Paye, led a group of partisans to protect Cllr. Sherman by physically barricading his house. These two reactions began the schism between the President and the Vice President. It also divided the party between Ellen supporters and Cllr. Sherman supporters - which included the VP and the Chairman. A friend of Senator Sherman



even said that the indictment had all been concocted by the President, "with the help of Georges Soros who funds Global Witness. I told Varney, that the Old'Ma will never forgive him for organizing that LAP convention in 1997 while she was on her way to Monrovia... You see..." Or could it be from that speech Cllr. Sherman gave as orator and he attacked the administration record on corruption and the senatorial campaign in Cape Mount in 2014 when President Sirleaf is said to have not shown support for Cllr. Sherman, the UP candidate?

The conspiracy theory was amplified when President Sirleaf appointed Mr. FonatiKoffa, the former Chairman and an official of Liberty Party (LP, opposition) as special prosecutor to investigate the case. There had been attempts to have Mr. Charles Brumskine (LP) to merge with UP and face Mr. George Weah's CDC but Mr. Boakai, as he would, rejected him and other names suggested by President Sirleaf. I once asked the President if anyone imposed Joe Boakai on her. She said "no" and I then asked her why she wants to impose a vice president on him.

Everything fell apart when Dr. Toga McIntosh ended his tenure as Vice-President of ECOWAS and returned home. He declared his intentions to run for President on the UP ticket, against Boakai in a primary. Boakai's camp accused President Sirleaf of bringing Dr. McIntosh to deprive Mr. Boakai of his chance of becoming president. Meanwhile, Dr. McIntosh was angry at Madam Sirleaf for not pushing his candidacy for the presidency of ECOWAS and was planning an anti-Sirleaf campaign. He ended up joining the CDC.

The Vice President had stopped showing up at Cabinet and other functions with the President. In one of his first and most notable campaign speeches, he compared himself to "a race car that had been parked" in a garage and was asking Liberian voters to give him a chance to prove himself. This was his campaign tagline that came to haunt him.

Either by choice or constraint, Mr. Boakai's team was headed with people who had personal issues with President Sirleaf. One of his most important and vocal surrogate group was run by people who had tried to expel Madam Sirleaf from the Unity Party in the early 2000s and never accepted her leadership. By an uncanny coincidence, everyone in the leadership of the campaign had had a fall-out with President Sirleaf, one way or the other, either leaving the administration unceremoniously or being fired. How did that impact the campaign?

There are countless situations that showed the widening gap between the President and the VP. Here is a good example.

The Ministry of Public Works was planning a groundbreaking ceremony in Bong County for a road to Lofa, Boakai's hometown. Boakai's campaign theme had been "roads, roads, roads." President Sirleaf was to be there. I asked her if she had invited the Vice President and she responded that invitations were issued by the Ministry to all cabinet members. Later I called VP Boakai's campaign and asked if they were aware of the program and I was told they were meeting to discuss it. Later that night, I learned that their candidate had a different schedule. A person close to the campaign said there was nothing for "Uncle Joe to gain by standing next to Ellen, she is too unpopular; we don't need her."

On the day of that event, Ambassador Jeremiah Sulunteh was joining the CDC campaign after ANC failed to advance to the second round where he was second to Alex Cummings. Senators George Weah and Jewel Howard Taylor were both in Gbarnga for that program and decided to attend the groundbreaking ceremony. And in the glare of cameras, President Sirleaf tried to pass the shovel to Senator Taylor who declined and deferred to Senator George Weah her senior on the campaign ticket. The picture was probably the most defining and symbolic moment of the campaign. The same people who said that there was nothing to gain for Mr. Boakai to be next to the President turned around and started to call her "traitor."

A day later, the New Democrat carried a headline quoting former ALP candidate Benoni Urey yelling "Ellen wicked." I called and met with UP-Chairman Wilmot Paye at a restaurant and showed him the caption. I told him that whenever they published such stories, they lose die-hard supporters of Ellen who may have been leaning towards supporting Boakai. I told him that the person to beat was George Weah and not Ellen Johnson Sirleaf. No matter how unpopular, a sitting president would always have 20-30 percent of supporters. He laughed when I said that 20-30 percent could be the margin by which they might lose. He said, "we shall see."

As the gap between Mr. Boakai and Ms. Sirleaf became wider, anyone close to Mrs. Sirleaf was an "enemy" or a "spy." Without falling into gossips, the UP campaign turned down the support of the Superintendent of Montserrado County, the largest vote market in the country, simply because she was a friend of Mrs. Sirleaf. On the first meeting of the transition team headed by President Sirleaf and President-Elect Weah, she sat with the CDC team.

While President Sirleaf and her Vice President stood "their grounds," others made sure a wall rose between them and in the end, they could no longer see each other.

CDC became a natural ally to the President and to some of her followers. From there, the rest was history. President Sirleaf did not have to help CDC, UP was doing all the work. Self-preservation took over the legacy.

Former President Pro-Temp Findley - current Minister of Foreign Affairs had worked for years in Bassa County to regain his footing in preparation for 2017. He walked away from UP and joined CDC.

To be continued...

MORE HEADLINE NEWS MORE HEADLINE NEWS

MCA-L Boosts Electricity Regulator's Capacity

-donates US\$193,000 in vehicles and equipment

The Millennium Challenge Account Liberia (MCA-L) has equipped the Liberia Electricity Regulatory Commission (LERC) with vehicles and office materials worth over US\$193,000, as part of ongoing support to stand up the regulator.

At a turnover ceremony on September 10, MCA-L presented to the LERC, a range of equipment including a video-conferencing system, printers, laptops, presentation screens, along with three Ford Everest utility vehicles.

LERC was created through the Electricity Law of 2015 to license electricity suppliers, including the Liberia Electricity Corporation (LEC).

MCA-L's Chief Executive Officer, Monie Captan, who presented the items to Hon. J. Aloysius Tarlue, Jr., Chairman of LERC, said MCA-L is committed to ensuring that LERC has the capacity to deliver on the objectives of

the Electricity Law. "For many years, we've gone without an effective regulator," Captan said. He contrasted the electricity

"We would like to see the same happen for the electricity sector, where we will one day have other service providers in addition to LEC, providing effective, efficient services to the Liberian public

Commission." A key goal of the Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC) Compact for Liberia is to promote economic growth through access to reliable and affordable electricity.

in electricity. MCC Deputy Resident Country Director, Kevin George called LERC a "steward of the electricity sector."

"You're there to make sure that the utility and the providers are productive and effective," he told the LERC employees. "But you're also there to look out for the interest of the businessman and the ordinary Liberians who seek good access to electricity. And I know that's not an easy road, but with LERC present and doing its job, I believe it's not too far in the distant future when it's no longer a binding constraint on the economy."

In his brief remarks, Chairman Tarlue thanked MCA-L, MCC, and the American people, "whose taxes have been working here for the cause of Africa."

He recounted the support MCC and MCA-L had provided to LERC, including providing the agency with office space, recruitment of key staff, and supporting a recently completed national operator census, which aimed to create a database of electricity providers operating across the country that will allow LERC to determine the specifics of its regulations.



(L to R) LERC Commissioner Thomas Q. Harris, MCA-L CEO Monie R. Captan, who's presenting the keys of the vehicles to LERC Chair J. Aloysius Tarlue, as LERC Commissioner Togar Nimely, MCC Deputy Resident Country Director Kevin George, and LERC Executive Director Gus Goanue look on.

sector with the much more advanced telecommunications sector, which has several players and is more strongly regulated.

and we'll be able to meet the growth in demand over the years - and a lot of that depends on the work you do at the Electricity Regulatory

As part of its mandate, LERC will also establish, monitor, and enforce safety standards related to electricity supply and use. The agency will regulate the electricity industry and market participants in the areas of generation, transmission, system operation, distribution, import and export, and trading

UL Alumni donate sporting materials

By Winston W. Parley

The Alumni Association of the University of Liberia (AAUL), at home and in the United States has donated a consignment of sporting materials and a full band set to the University in support of its sporting activities.

Liberia Revenue Authority (LRA) Commissioner General, Alumnus Thomas Doe Nah made the presentation Monday, 16 September on behalf of the U.S. - based Alumni headed by Mr. Melvin Howard to the president of the Alumni in Liberia Mr. James S. Davis, II, on Capitol

Hill. The donation was subsequently turned over to UL Vice President for Academic Affairs Dr. William Ezra Allen.

Receiving the donation, Dr. Allen says the University has been looking for the days it can restore and revive the healthy academic rivalry [that it had in the past with its compatriots, including Cuttington University].

"What you have done today, you have stimulated, you have added fuel that will enable us to reactivate that rivalry. So thank you very much," Dr. Allen says.

"These items come at a time where we don't only need them, but we are going to use them," Dr. Allen says, adding that the University already has a scheduled game with Cuttington.

In further appreciation of the Alumni Association's support to the University, Dr. Allen recalls that few months back he on behalf of the University received a little over US\$12,000 from the Alumni president in Liberia Mr. James Davis.

On behalf of UL administration, the faculty and students, Dr. Allen expresses deepest appreciation to the Alumni for the donation.

Earlier, LRA Commissioner General Alumnus Thomas Doe Nah made the presentation of a full band set that includes drums, guitar and trumpet along with sporting materials to the University on behalf of the AAUL in the United States.

Presenting the donation, Mr. Nah indicates that many times in Liberia there is much talk and less action, but he is pleased today that "we have transcended talk and we are now acting."

According to Mr. Nah, UL Alumni both at home and abroad have been concerned about what contribution they can make to the University.

"But I want to say that this presentation lays the



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foundation for us to take Alumni contribution to higher heights," he says.

According to him, UL Alumni based in Liberia also contributed to the donation in the tune of US\$12,000 of the US\$20,000 that was allocated.

For his part, UL Alumni president in Liberia Mr. James S. Davis, II, says he is excited by the donation.

He applauds the gesture of the UL Alumni by coming back to bless the institution that has prepared them and the next generation by giving back for what they have learned over the years.

"Few months ago we were in this same room when we made the official donation of twelve thousand United States dollars from the University of Liberia Alumni Association in Liberia. The AAUL is the parent organization of all alumni around the world," he says.

Mr. Davis names some of those who contributed to the initiative as former UL Visitor ex-president Ellen Johnson - Sirleaf, Information Minister Eugene Nagbe, Bishop John Innis, National Social Security, Cllr. Charles Walker Brumskine, Dr. Walter Wiles, among others.

MORE HEADLINE NEWS

MORE HEADLINE NEWS

UNDP trains 663 Immigration Officers

Over 600 officers of the Liberia Immigration Service (LIS) have graduated following a three-week intensive in service training at the Justice and Security Regional Hub in Gbarnga, Bong County. The training was conducted in 3 batches, in close consultation with the Judiciary, the Ministry of Justice and other principal institutional counterparts.

It forms part of activities being implemented under the UNDP/OHCHR Joint Programme, aimed at supporting the Government of Liberia, in its efforts to advance critical justice and security sector reforms and sustainably improve the delivery of justice, security and protection services across the country. Funding resources are provided by the Governments of Sweden and Ireland.

184 of the officers that participated in the training are women. According to the Director for Administration, Danny Sartee, more than 40 women hold leadership



LIS officers

positions in the LIS. Turning over the graduates, Colonel George Suomie said the exercise is part of the completion of the Security Sector Reform (SSR) process of the Country. Colonel Suomie hailed the outstanding discipline and interest exhibited by the officers attending the training. He assured that knowledge transferred and capacity building skills imparted, will

contribute to a more proficient, effective, efficient, professional and disciplined corps of officers that will help protect Liberia's borders.

"Training is everything and everything is training" and we appreciate the support of all partners, including UNDP, for this great opportunity once again afforded our officers to benefit,' Suomie said. He described the training as

successful, with no reports of any casualties-only minor malaria, fever and pressure cases. UNDP Resident Representative Pa Lamin Beyai was represented by Marzu Stubberfield Quaye, Project Assistant under the Governance Programme. Speaking at the occasion, Ms. Quaye expressed appreciation to the graduates for availing themselves for the training, encouraging them to remain committed to their duties and responsibilities to the country.

"Protecting the borders of this country is not an easy task. Your duty is extremely critical and requires diligence, professionalism and commitment," she emphasized. Ms. Quaye also mentioned that the duties being performed by

Immigration Officers will always be recognized because their functions are strategic. The Commissioner-General of the Liberia Immigration Service, Robert Budy congratulated the officers for a job well done and expressed appreciation to UNDP and partners for the continued support.

Commissioner Budy said the training was necessary because LIS was lagging behind in the final structure of the Security Sector Reform (SSR) process. He emphasized that the government attaches premium on border security, to avoid infiltration of illegal migrants and substances that negatively affect the stability of the Country, with human trafficking becoming prevalent in Liberia. Colonel Budy urged graduates to prepare themselves to utilize the skills and to also transfer knowledge to incoming officers.

The training covered courses on investigation, fraud, human trafficking, and the new act of the LIS etc.

The UNDP/OHCHR Joint Programme works to enhance the capacities of, and build public confidence in the different justice and security institutions. It also strengthens access to justice, security and protection services, especially for women and girls.

Interventions are designed with a view to ensuring sustainability and linking activities to "system-level policy development".

NEC concludes Electoral Law Reform

Women participation increases as NEC concludes the Electoral Law Reform Consultations sponsored by UNDP and Partners.

The participation of women significantly improved during the last Consultative Workshop on Electoral Law Reform that was held in Gbarnga, Bongo County from September 11th-12th, 2019. The two-day Consultation was sponsored by the Elections Basket Fund-European Union, the Governments of Ireland, Sweden and Canada as well as USAID. The aim was to gain the input from various stakeholders on the proposed changes in the Elections Law

of 1986 and the amended Law of 2014.

It was officiated by the Chairperson of the NEC's Board of Commissioners, Cllr. Jerome George Korkoya.

In his address, Cllr. Korkoya urged participants to "critically review the current Law, identify sections that require modifying and propose the relevant changes". Cllr. Korkoya thanked the Development Partners for their continued support to the NEC, particularly in relations to rolling out the Elections Law Reform Consultations in different parts of the country.

In his address, the Deputy Minister of Justice Cllr. Nyanti Tuan, called for active engagement by workshop

participants so that their views could be captured on behalf of the people they represent.

Tuan urged participants to "become NEC's ambassadors and share the information from the event with the people in their communities".

According to UNDP National Programme Officer, "Women from Lofa, Nimba and Bong County made an impressive turn out for this Consultative Workshop". Other special interest groups present included Persons with Disabilities (PwDs) and the elderly.

Roosevelt Zayzay thanked the delegates, especially women, for turning up in large numbers and for actively participating in the exercise.

Some of the key

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deliberations from the workshop included: the proposal to reduce the tenure of Presidential term from six to four years; the proposal for public officials to resign at least two years before the campaign period, the proposal to change the election date from the second Tuesday of October to the second week of November in the election year; the mandatory representation of women in every electoral district and Political Party, among others.

The Gbarnga event concluded the series of Consultations that were conducted by the National Elections Commission in various parts of the country. Key presentations made during this Workshop included: a session on the "General Administration of the NEC" and a session on the "Constitutional issues for the

long-term Reform" that were done by the NEC Senior Legal Officer, Cllr. Teage Jalloh.

Presentations were also made on Voter Registration and Electoral Justice among other presentations.

Participants' feedback sessions were organized in the form of group work, where participants were divided into groups according to the County they represented. Views of each group were thereafter shared with the Plenary by one group member for documentation.

Workshop participants included: NEC Magistrates from Lofa, Nimba and Bong Counties; Superintendents from the afore-mentioned Counties, members of Civil Society Organizations, Women Organizations and Persons with Disabilities (PwDs), among others.



Français

Weah prêt pour la création d'un tribunal de crimes de guerre

Le président George Manneh Weah a soumis à la Chambre des représentants les recommandations finales du Forum économique national (NED) qui vient de s'achever, demandant conseils pour la création d'un tribunal de crimes de guerre et crimes économiques au Libéria.

« En tant que Président de la République du Libéria, je suis attaché à une mise en œuvre globale du consensus national et demande donc au pouvoir législatif du Libéria des conseils et un guide en ce qui concerne toutes les mesures législatives et autres mesures nécessaires pour la mise en œuvre des recommandations de la CVR (Commission Vérité et réconciliation), y compris la mise en place d'un tribunal de crimes économiques et de crimes de guerre », a

déclaré Weah dans une communication qu'il a adressée à la Chambre des représentants.

La lettre signée par le président Weah a été lue lors de la dernière séance plénière de la Chambre des

représentants à Capitol Hill, à Monrovia, le vendredi 13 septembre.

Parmi ses recommandations du Forum économique national présidé par l'ancien ministre libérien des Affaires étrangères et

économiste, M. Toga Gayewea McIntosh, figure la création d'un tribunal de crimes de guerre et crimes économiques.

Avant le dialogue appelé par le président Weah, la demande de la création d'un tribunal a été l'une des revendications clés d'une série de manifestations ici. Mais le régime du président Weah s'était montré hésitant à se prononcer sur la question, l'un de ses principaux alliés politiques, le sénateur du comté de Nimba, Prince Yormie Johnson, ancien général rebelle, s'opposant farouchement à la création d'un tribunal pour les crimes de guerre et les crimes contre l'humanité.

Sous son nez, l'ancien président libérien en exercice, Samuel Kanyon Doe, fut brutalement assassiné au cours de la crise civile qui a sévi ici. Cependant, le sénateur Johnson n'est pas seul à l'Assemblée législative, car les Libériens continuent d'attribuer aux criminels de guerre des pouvoirs politiques et lucratifs.

Selon la lettre du Président Weah, la situation des responsabilités des violations des droits de l'homme commises pendant la guerre est indispensable au maintien de la paix et à la réalisation du développement inclusif.

La lettre indique que le consensus national dans le cadre de la stratégie thématique de consolidation de la paix et de réconciliation a recommandé la mise en œuvre du rapport de la Commission Vérité et Réconciliation, y compris la création des tribunaux de crimes de guerre et de crimes économiques.

En outre, M. Weah a informé la Chambre des représentants de ce que les Nations Unies ont attiré l'attention du gouvernement

libérien sur deux séries d'amendements au Statut de la Cour pénale internationale, dont l'amendement relatif aux crimes de guerre et l'amendement relatif aux crimes d'agression.

Il a indiqué que le Forum national économique a présenté au gouvernement libérien un "consensus national sans précédent sur la relance et la croissance de l'économie libérienne", visant à prévenir les tendances économiques en déclin et à rajeunir un modèle de croissance économique progressive et régulière au Libéria.

Selon le président Weah, le dialogue économique a identifié quatre stratégies thématiques clés nécessitant une action immédiate et à moyen terme pour relancer et développer l'économie libérienne.

Il s'agit, selon lui, de la mobilisation et de la gestion des finances publiques, de l'investissement et de la croissance du secteur privé, de la lutte contre le chômage, de la formation et du développement des compétences, et de la consolidation de la paix et la réconciliation.

Le Forum économique national s'est tenu à Monrovia du 4 au 6 septembre 2019, réunissant plus de 350 participants issus des trois pouvoirs de l'Etat, des partis politiques, des établissements de l'enseignement supérieur, des groupes de jeunes et des groupes de femmes. Il y avait aussi des représentants des partenaires au développement, des représentants des organisations de la société civile et des experts internationaux.

Les participants ont mené une réflexion sur les défis économiques et monétaires auxquels le pays est actuellement confronté.



La procureure de la CPI fait appel de l'acquittement de Gbagbo et Blé Goudé

La procureure de la Cour pénale internationale a fait appel de l'acquittement de l'ex-président ivoirien Laurent Gbagbo et de l'ancien chef des Jeunes patriotes de Côte d'Ivoire, Charles Blé Goudé. Fatou Bensouda estime que les juges auraient dû demander un non-lieu et non un acquittement.

En janvier dernier, ils avaient acquitté les deux Ivoiriens en soulignant l'extrême faiblesse des preuves présentées par

l'accusation, ce que conteste aujourd'hui Fatou Bensouda.

La différence est importante : l'acquittement innocent les deux Ivoiriens tandis que le non-lieu laisse ouverte la question de la responsabilité dans les crimes qui leur étaient reprochés, à savoir des crimes contre l'humanité dans la crise qui avait suivi l'élection présidentielle de 2010.

Déplacements limités
La procédure doit désormais être assez longue,

comme elles le sont souvent à la CPI. Pour l'instant, la procureure n'en dit pas plus. Elle ne dit pas notamment si elle compte demander une reprise du procès. Elle compte détailler ses arguments dans le mémoire qu'elle doit présenter au juge de la cour d'appel d'ici décembre.

Les avocats de la défense, qui défendent Charles Blé Goudé et Laurent Gbagbo, devront ensuite lui répondre. Puis s'ensuivront éventuellement quelques jours d'audience avant que les juges de la chambre d'appel ne délibèrent sur les questions soulevées par le bureau du procureur.

En attendant, l'ordonnance émise le 1er février contre Laurent Gbagbo et Charles Blé Goudé qui limitait leurs déplacements reste valable. Ils ne sont pas pour l'instant libres de leurs mouvements et ne peuvent retourner en Côte d'Ivoire. L'ex-président ivoirien, qui est toujours à Bruxelles placé sous contrôle judiciaire, n'a en effet jusqu'à présent pas eu l'autorisation de la CPI de quitter la capitale belge. Charles Blé Goudé, quant à lui, se trouve toujours à La Haye dans un appartement privé.



Articles traduits

Par Valéry G. Guhéna

E-mail: valeryghn10@yahoo.com

Tel: 076 589 44 0881483394

Français

Éditorial

Pourquoi ce silence assourdissant de l'Eglise ?

La voix autrefois stridente de l'Église Libérienne a été frappée par un mutisme inouï. Le Conseil des églises du Libéria ne tenait pas sa langue dans ses poches dans les années 80. Mais hélas, c'est maintenant du passé. Il est maintenant devenu muet au point que l'État ne semble plus avoir de guide.

Cela est non seulement regrettable, mais aussi très attristant car ce sont maintenant les chefs traditionnels et les « zoos » qui semblent diriger le gouvernement pendant que l'Eglise est endormie.

Nous nous souvenons des jours de notre archevêque catholique Michael Kpakala Francis, paix à son âme, de notre évêque épiscopal George D. Browne et de mon évêque méthodiste à la retraite, Arthur F. Kula, lorsque le LCC était le porte-parole du peuple, soulignant et condamnant les tars de la société.

Ce n'est plus le cas actuellement. Le Conseil des Églises actuel semble avoir fermé les yeux sur ce qui se passe dans le pays, au point que les citoyens se sentent délaissés, ils n'ont plus personne vers qui se tourner pour avoir de l'espoir.

Les vices qui sévissent dans notre pays bien-aimé sont énormes et ont besoin de solutions. Cela va des généraux ex-rebelles devenus acteurs de l'État au détournement des 25 millions de nos réserves nationales, en passant par l'impression excessive des billets de banque et l'inondations du marché de faux billets, les viols, les meurtres généralisés et la violence électorale, le tout couronné par une stagnation économique sans précédent qui étrangle le peuple, entre autres.

Ces excès sont imputables aussi bien à l'administration précédente qu'à l'administration Weah hautement incompétente, qui non seulement a exacerbé la situation, mais aussi se vautre dans l'arrogance et la cupidité exceptionnelle.

Au milieu des maux, l'Eglise, elle, observe un silence assourdissant. La nation a besoin de prière, de guérison et d'orientation spirituelle. Les « zoos » et les chefs se sentent ainsi obligés de combler le vide laissé par le silence de la voix de la conscience.

La nation est à la recherche de direction. Mais les messagers de Dieu sont assis et regardent, tandis que les gens brûlent de soif et de désespoir. Le LCC est devenu tellement diplomate qu'il se préoccupe désormais de ses affaires, de peur qu'il ne fasse des vagues.

Qui parlera alors au nom des masses souffrantes ? Les politiciens cupides et malhonnêtes sont très occupés à trouver des stratagèmes pour mentir et donner de faux espoirs aux Libériens noyés dans le désespoir. Dieu regarde ! L'Eglise devrait se préparer à rendre compte de son inaction.

Nous exhortons le Conseil à prendre son courage en main pour dire au président Weah que le moment est venu pour mettre en place un tribunal de crimes de guerre et des crimes économiques au Libéria afin de mettre en œuvre les

COMMENTAIRE

Par Jasmine M. El-Gamal

L'unité arabe existe-t-elle encore ?

BEYROUTH - Historiquement, la tâche consistant à promouvoir le multilatéralisme au Moyen-Orient a longtemps incombé à deux institutions : d'une part la Ligue des États arabes, large alliance de collaboration autour des questions politiques, économiques et culturelles, et d'autre part le Conseil de coopération du Golfe (CCG), principalement chargé des problématiques économiques. En dépit de plusieurs différences dans leur histoire, leurs axes de travail et leurs membres, ces deux organes sont censés faire office de garants de l'unité arabe autour de questions majeures - telles que l'opposition à Israël - tout en prévenant les conflits entre États membres.

Pendant plusieurs décennies, le conflit israélo-palestinien a rallié les pays arabes derrière la cause commune de la défense de statut d'État de la Palestine. Mais depuis les soulèvements du Printemps arabe de 2011, trois considérations beaucoup plus clivantes occupent le devant de la scène : menace perçue en provenance de l'Iran, propagation du terrorisme régionale, et montée en puissance de l'islam politique (ou islamisme).

Ces évolutions ont rompu un certain nombre d'alliances traditionnelles, et créé des modèles de coopération multilatérale beaucoup plus flexibles dans la région. La politique occidentale au Moyen-Orient - en particulier celle des États-Unis - est par ailleurs de nature à renforcer cette tendance.

Premièrement, les gouvernements arabes sunnites considèrent l'influence et les activités régionales de l'Iran comme une menace fondamentale pour leurs intérêts. L'hostilité croissante entre d'un côté l'Arabie saoudite, les Émirats arabes unis, et de l'autre l'Iran, vient ainsi éclipser l'opposition traditionnellement partagée par ces pays à l'encontre d'Israël. Constat sans précédent, un certain nombre de gouvernements arabes travaillent désormais étroitement avec Israël pour contrer la menace iranienne. Cette coopération, qui s'opère principalement en coulisses, a éclaté au grand jour en février 2019 lors de la conférence américaine « anti-Iran » organisée à Varsovie, que le Premier ministre israélien Benjamin Netanyahu a salué comme une avancée majeure dans les relations arabo-israéliennes. Ces liens sont voués à se renforcer à mesure que l'Arabie saoudite et l'Iran poursuivront leur compétition stratégique et leur confrontation par procuration dans la région.

Deuxièmement, la menace du terrorisme djihadiste au Moyen-Orient a été aggravée par les violents conflits de Syrie et de Libye, et s'est depuis manifesté sous forme de nombreux attentats en Égypte, en Tunisie, en Jordanie et dans d'autres pays, éprouvant ainsi la Ligue arabe, et dressant ses États membres les uns contre les autres. Lorsque le dirigeant libyen Mouammar Kadhafi, par exemple, a violemment réprimé la révolte populaire dans son pays en 2011, la Ligue a réagi en suspendant la Libye de l'organisation, ainsi qu'en soutenant activement le renversement de Kadhafi par l'OTAN et les forces rebelles libyennes plus tard cette année-là.

Peu après, les membres de la Ligue arabe ont

condamné le président syrien Bachar el-Assad pour son appui au terrorisme dans la région, et exclu la Syrie de l'organisation. Aujourd'hui, la Ligue se montre divisée sur la question du statut de membre de la Syrie. Plusieurs États arabes sunnites s'y opposent vivement, faisant valoir qu'Assad aurait permis à l'Iran d'étendre son influence dans la région, et renforcé les milices chiites telles que le Hezbollah au Liban, ce qui représenterait une menace directe pour leurs régimes. Par opposition, les gouvernements d'Irak et de Tunisie appellent publiquement au rétablissement du statut de membre de la Syrie.

Enfin, la montée de l'islam politique au lendemain du Printemps arabe - y compris les victoires électorales remportées par les islamistes dans des pays tels que l'Égypte et la Tunisie - vient accentuer les divisions régionales. Redoutant une poussée islamiste, les autorités d'Égypte, d'Arabie saoudite et des Émirats arabes unis ont mené un effort soutenu et coordonné pour endiguer l'influence croissante de groupes tels que les Frères musulmans dans la région. L'illustration la plus frappante réside dans le coup d'État menée par l'armée égyptienne en 2013 pour renverser Mohamed Morsi, membre des Frères musulmans et premier président démocratiquement élu à la tête du pays. Les États arabes se sont montrés divisés sur la question du renversement de Morsi, l'Arabie saoudite et les Émirats arabes unis soutenant la démarche, contre la vive opposition du Qatar.

Ces trois problématiques ont non seulement fracturé la Ligue arabe, mais également divisé un CCG axé sur les considérations économiques. Décision majeure, l'Arabie saoudite, le Bahreïn, les Émirats arabes unis, ainsi que l'Égypte pourtant extérieure au CCG, imposent un blocus politique et économique au Qatar depuis 2017, faisant valoir que le pays soutiendrait le terrorisme dans la région, et laisserait sa capitale, Doha, servir de refuge aux islamistes en exil. Les liens étroits qu'entretient le Qatar avec la Turquie et l'Iran constituent également une source de tensions dans la région.

L'effondrement du multilatéralisme traditionnel au Moyen-Orient a coïncidé avec un changement marqué dans l'approche américaine au sein de la région, sous la conduite du président Donald Trump. Son prédécesseur, Barack Obama, soutenait vivement le multilatéralisme et la formation de coalitions, ce qui a permis la conclusion de l'accord de 2015 sur le nucléaire iranien, ainsi que l'intervention militaire menée plus tôt par l'OTAN en Libye. Par opposition, Trump exprime fièrement son mépris pour les institutions multilatérales, et préfère négocier avec des partenaires (ou adversaires) proches de sa vision, dans un cadre purement bilatéral. L'opposition ferme de Trump à l'égard de l'Iran conduit par ailleurs le président américain à aligner pleinement les États-Unis avec le bloc anti-Iran de la région.

L'approche de l'administration Trump accentue la probabilité de voir les gouvernements arabes continuer de coopérer avec des alliés régionaux spécifiques autour de problématiques clés, plutôt que de tenter de forger un plus large consensus au sein de la Ligue arabe et du CCG. D'ores et déjà limitées, les perspectives d'une unité arabe sont ainsi vouées à diminuer encore davantage.

PERSPECTIVES PERSPECTIVES

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CDC-PROPOSED "PRO-POOR AGENDA": A REACTION

With Bai M. Gbala, Sr.

Introduction

The fanfare, pomp and pageantry that characterized the presentation and, later, wide distribution and circulation of the proposed Pro-Poor Agenda by the CDC Coalition led by President George Weah prompt this article of critical Analysis and the Commentary on the issues in the following pages.

We will show and inform the Liberian People, their Partners-in-Progress and friendly Donors of the International Community that the Pro-Poor Agenda is apoly and deceptive. It is planned/designed based on a set of political beliefs and philosophy deeply-rooted ingraft/greed and massive theft of public resources - the roaring, rampant Liberia Corruption, Incorporated.

But Firstly, what are the relevant, significant meanings of the English-Language terms of "pro" & "poor"?

The term pro, a prefix, means, in this context, "for or on behalf of"; while, poor "is the condition of lack of material wealth and/or inability to acquire such wealth", in relative terms. The term poverty, "is the condition of being poor", used, often, to express the same condition.

International Convention has described economic poverty by determination of a level represented by number that denotes and known as being the acute crisis condition or Level of being poor designated as the "Poverty Line". Poverty conditions found to be equal to or greater than this number or much more acute and damaging to human well-being is said and determined to be below the Poverty Line. It is this Level or Number that is unacceptable to liberal, progressive and democratic governments, under law, committed to reduce, control and, eventually, eradicate through application of rational public policy.

The CDC-Proposed Pro-Poor Agenda

The Proposed Agenda is a Four-point plan designated as Pillars, a comprehensive, holistic program of work for social, cultural, economic and political development of the Liberian nation for prosperity, justice, freedom and Liberian "human freedom from want" as the Pro-Poor Agenda for Prosperity & Development (PAPD).

The Program asserts that "It is about the people, how to strengthen their capacity to thrive; how to draw all Liberians living at home and abroad into the national development process; that over the next five years, addressing the basic needs of Liberians for income security, better access to basic services, and greater opportunities for self-improvement in an enabling environment that is inclusive and stable will be at the core of the pro-poor agenda"; and that "while one of the aims, over the long term remains raising per capita income levels and economic status to a middle-income country as outlined under the Vision 2030 framework, the focus over the next five years will be on removing the binding constraints to reaching that goal" and constitute the following.

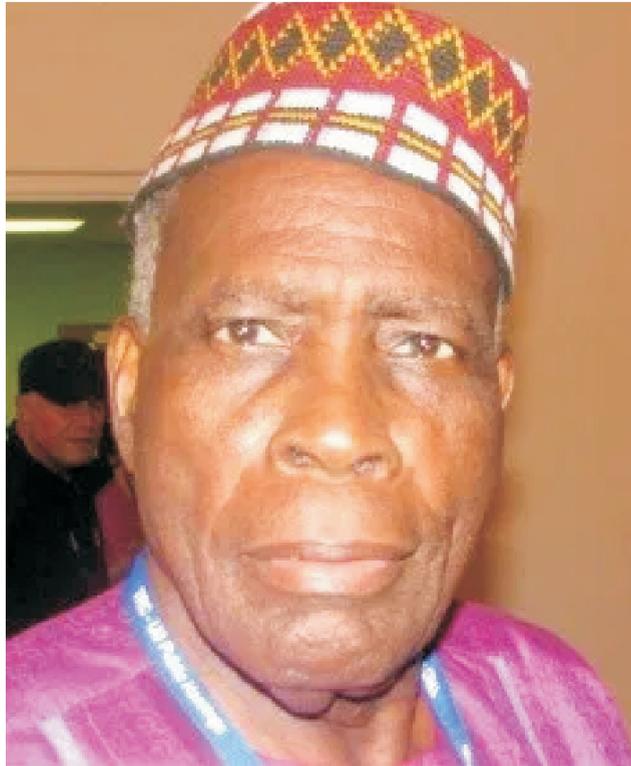
Goals of the PAPD

In view of the foregoing, the objectives of the PAPD are to:

- "Build more capable and trusted state institutions that will lead to a stable, resilient and inclusive nation embracing its triple heritage anchored on its African identity; and
- "Provide greater income security to an additional one million Liberians, and reduce absolute poverty by 23 percent across 5 out of 6 regions through sustained and inclusive economic growth driven by scaled-up investments in agriculture, in infrastructure, in human resource development, and in social protection".

Pillars of the PAPD

Accordingly, to make progress towards the PAPD and, eventually, the Vision 2030 goals over the next five years, the strategies and interventions built around four pillars which will form the pathways for the next five years are:



- "Power to the People", to empower Liberians with the tools to gain control of their lives through more equitable provision of opportunities in education, health, youth development, and social protection;
- "The Economy and Jobs", economic stability and job creation through effective resource mobilization and prudent management of economic inclusion;
- "Sustaining the Peace", promoting a cohesive society for sustainable development and Governance; and
- "Transparency", an inclusive and accountable public sector for shared prosperity and sustainable development. The second priority for the government under this pillar is reducing corruption. Corruption undermines the capacity of the state and increases the cost to deliver basic services. To achieve this, the government commits to strengthening anti-graft institutions as the foot soldiers.

The Proposed Agenda for Development & Prosperity (PAPD)

Indeed, this proposal as written is a professional masterpiece of comprehensive, macroeconomic public policy analysis, planning and development program of work activities designed for socio-economic and political prosperity of the Liberian nation and People. But . . . Who are the Proponents or Proposers?

In the light of the facts of history of Liberia's turbulent past, recent past and the present- prevailing decadent socio-economic and political activities of Liberian GOVERNMENT & GOVERNANCE, answers to this question are and will be critical and crucial.

For, integrity, creditability - transparency, accountability, training/experience, commitment to the rule of law are axiomatic expectations/requirements of an individual or organization, government or private, particularly, government in this case. These variables are a function of or depend upon the character (acts of commission/omission or a set of belief systems or policy expressed or implied) of the leader or leaders of such organization(s). The Proposers of the Pro-Poor Agenda are leading members of the CDC Government led by the President of Liberia, His Excellency, George M. Weah:

A. Mr. George M. Weah

According to public record, Mr. Weah was elected President of Liberia on October 10, 2017 and inaugurated as President on January 20, 2018. But President Weah is citizen of two foreign countries, a violation of Liberian Law by a sitting President; further:

- As President, Mr. Weah flirted with and became close friend of a flamboyant, playboy politician, the former President of Liberia, Mr. Charles M. Taylor, African Chief political criminal serving a 50-year sentence in prison for political crimes against humanity. Mr. Weah, as candidate, selected Mrs. Jewel Howard-Taylor,

estranged wife of the former President as running mate/Vice President on his CDC political Party ticket. Mrs. Taylor is, now, Liberia's Vice President while, simultaneously, Flag Bearer of the notorious National Patriotic Party of massive human rights violations and corruption.

- President Weah vowed, publicly, that there will be no War Crime Tribunal in Liberia, a solemn commitment to the prevailing "culture of impunity", official protection of the civil war suspects from prosecution, a deeply-troubling statement.

- President Weah declared recently that "If you know book but you do not own a house or bicycle, etc, you are stupid", in an apparent rebuke or criticism-mockery of Liberian academics, practicing political party politicians. Moreover, the President's public refusal to declare his assets is violation of and disobedience to law and, also, his reluctance-refusal to demand loyalists in high government positions declare assets say volumes to the people that public service is an opportunity to steal public resources, especially, at this time when he (the President) and associates are actively-engaged in massive acquisition of wealth.

- President Weah has been, and is, in close, troubling alliance with some of the most deadly perpetrators of human rights violations - rapes, maiming, beatings, arrests, ethnic cleansing, massacres, and above all, summary executions without trial of innocent men, women and children.

- In a public outburst in an apparent retaliation to criticism by Liberian academics/intellectuals, the so-called "political progressives, the President said, again, that "if you know book and you have no house or bicycle you are stupid". In this context, that statement translates to if you are an academic/intellectual and former or present employee of government but own no property, then you must be or that you are a fool, because public service is opportunity to acquire or amass wealth by stealing public resources.

- The Government of President Weah is a different political party from all others, though not ideologically and, therefore, dominated by loyalists of the former President, including major war crimes suspects. Importantly, as indicated earlier, President Weah is, reportedly, not only citizen of foreign countries, a violation of Liberian law, but also, refuses, publicly, to declare assets as required by an Act of Legislature, the Code of Conduct, also law violation by a sitting President.

B. Samuel D. Tweah, Jr., Minister of Finance & Development Planning (MFDP)

This Agency of government was formerly the Ministry of Finance charged with responsibility only for Fiscal Affairs and known, historically, with its former section or division of the Revenue Agency, as the nation's centers for get-rich-quick schemes of graft/greed or the gurus of Liberian government stealing of public resources. Almost all wealthy land and related property owners of Mamba Point and new suburbs of Sinkor and elsewhere were executives or employees of the Ministry of Finance or the Revenue Agency. The Ministry of Finance is, now, the Super Ministry of Finance & Development Planning (MF&DP) and the Revenue Agency has, now, become Liberia Revenue Authority (LRA).

The Honorable Samuel D. Tweah is Minister and Head of this Agency of Government that prepared and presented the Pro-Poor Agenda:

- As Minister of Finance & Development Planning, Honorable Samuel Tweah was appointed by President Weah as Chairman of the Technical Economic Management Team (TEMT), in association of economic management cooperation/coordination with the Central Bank of Liberia for implementation of Government's Mop-Up Exercise designed to buy out Liberian-dollar banknotes in excess circulation with 25 million US dollars.

- But according to national/international investigation conducted and reports by Kroll Associates, Inc. and Liberia's Presidential Investigation Team (PIT), TEMT, chaired by Minister Samuel Tweah, was found guilty of avoiding organized commercial banks and licensed foreign-exchange traders and not using accepted/acceptable "best practices" to achieve best results.

To be continued...

Govt. to print LRD34bn

The chamber floor of the Liberian Senate burst into heated debate Monday, 16 September over plan by the Government of Liberia to print new currency, totaling 34 billion Liberian bank notes.

The Executive headed by President George Manneh Weah is seeking approval of the 54th Legislature to print the amount to replace the two different banknotes currently in circulation here.

Senators of the governing Coalition for Democratic Change are supportive of the plan, but their colleagues in the opposition are apprehensive, given experience from the 16 billion saga characterized by excess printing of the 'Legacy banknote' by the previous administration without approval of the Legislature.

Margibi County Senator Oscar Cooper warned that mere printing of banknotes does not in any way help an



economy if requisite monetary and fiscal policies are not in place, while Senator Varney G. Sherman of Grand Cape Mount County warned against printing higher denominations or higher bills such as 1,000 banknote for

fear of counterfeiting, as was experienced with the 500 Legacy banknote printed by the Sirleaf administration.

Montserrat County Senator Darius Dillon, the newest in the Senate, demands explanations on the rationale

behind the plan to print new Liberian banknote in the tune of whopping 34 billion, while reminding of the LRD16 billion saga in which former Executive

Governor of the Central Bank of Liberia Milton Weeks, Deputy Governor Charles Sirleaf, and other executives of the bank are being prosecuted on multiple charges.

But the Senate Committee on Banking and Finance defends the plan to print new banknotes, describing it as not only timely, but also intended to boost the economy, could not say how much of the Liberian bank notes are currently in circulation.

However, the printing of new bank notes have never solve any inflationary problems around the world. Most times these monies end up into the pockets of corrupt government officials and their central bank executives. With the mystery over the 16 billion still unsolved it remains to be seen whether printing of new currency here will not exacerbate the trending economic hardship.

Agricultural Innovation & Technology key to poverty reduction

- World Bank Report

Developing countries need to dramatically increase agricultural innovation and the use of technology by farmers, to eliminate poverty, meet the rising demand for food, and cope with the adverse effects of climate change, says a new World Bank report released Monday said.

Report notes that the relative stagnation in agricultural productivity in recent decades, particularly in South Asia and Africa where the vast majority of the poor live, underscores the need for new ideas to improve rural livelihoods. Renewed investment to increase new knowledge and ensure its adoption can help harness the large potential gains to be made in agricultural productivity and, hence, income, says the Harvesting Prosperity: Technology and Productivity Growth in Agriculture report.

It notes that nearly 80 percent of the world's extreme poor live in rural areas, with most relying on farming for their livelihood. Poverty reduction efforts, thus, need an intensive focus on raising agricultural productivity, which has the largest impact of any sector on poverty reduction, roughly twice that of manufacturing.

"Boosting productivity in the agriculture sector can lead to more and better jobs while enabling more people

to move off-farm to cities to pursue other opportunities. This requires comprehensive reform of domestic agricultural innovation systems, more effective public spending and the cultivation of inclusive agricultural value chains with an increased role for the private sector," said World Bank Group Vice President for Equitable Growth, Finance and Institutions, Ceyla Pazarbasioglu. "New technologies are improving access to and costs of information, finance and insurance in all sectors, including agriculture. This can help raise the productivity of low skilled farmers, but only with the right incentives and capabilities to develop and scale these technologies," she added.

The report examines the drivers and constraints to agricultural productivity and provides pragmatic policy advice. It notes that while in East Asia, crop yields have increased six-fold in the past four decades, contributing to the dramatic reduction in poverty in China and other East Asian countries, it has only doubled in Sub-Saharan Africa and parts of South Asia, with corresponding disappointing reductions in poverty.

In addition, climate change, together with a deteriorating natural resource base, will hit agriculture hard, impacting the poor and vulnerable, precisely in Africa

and South Asia.

The key driver for increasing agricultural productivity and rising incomes is the adoption of innovative technologies and practices by farmers. This will enable farmers to raise yields, manage inputs more efficiently, adopt new crops and production systems, improve the quality of their products, conserve natural resources, and adapt to climate challenges.

However, the world is facing a widening research and development (R&D) spending gap, even as government funding for agriculture is reaching new heights. In developed countries, investment in agricultural R&D was equivalent to 3.25 percent of agricultural GDP in 2011, compared with 0.52 percent in developing countries. Among the latter group, Brazil and China invested relatively high amounts into agricultural R&D, while Africa and South Asia had the lowest spending relative to agricultural GDP. In fact, in half of African countries, R&D spending is actually declining.

Governments need to consider both public and private research and technology transfer in strengthening their overall innovation system. Repurposing the current public support for agriculture offers a significant opportunity to revitalize public agricultural research systems, invest in agricultural higher education, and create the enabling conditions to leverage private sector R&D. The private sector, in turn, can stimulate more

International Bank gets anti-money laundering award

International Bank Liberia Limited (IBLL) recently received the best in Anti-Money Laundering Compliance in Liberia Award by the Association of Certified Compliance Professionals in Africa (ACCPA) at the 2019 ACCPA Compliance Conference held in South Africa.

According to a press release issued by the Bank on 16 September, the 2019 ACCPA Compliance Conference was held under the theme "Improving Risk & Compliance Standards in Africa, at Hilton Hotel, in Sandton, Johannesburg, South Africa on August 29 & 30, 2019.

The release says IBLL was nominated for the award along with four other banks from Liberia and was also nominated for the continental award of Most Improved Compliance Program.

According to the ACCPA, IBLL won the award as a result of the bank "making the most commitment towards the Risk & Compliance function at the institution."

Nominees and winners of the ACCPA Award are determined using ACCPA Score assessment which assesses the strengths of a financial institution's compliance

program.

The areas of risk and compliance commitment include professional certification for the risk and compliance staff, risk and compliance training for employees, customer verification, transaction screening and PEP screening.

Other areas assessed during the evaluation process include sponsorship for staff to attend risk compliance events and attitude and competency of the risk and compliance staff.

According to IBLL Chief Executive Officer, Henry F. Saamoi, the recognition serves to highlight the bank's commitment to adhering to the highest ethical and professional standards of banking, boosting the confidence of customers and the public, and IBLL pledges to maintain such high standards.

The Association of Certified Compliance Professionals in Africa is the Gold Standard for Risk & Compliance professional certification in Africa. It assesses the strength of the Risk & Compliance function at financial institutions every year and recognizes the institutions that are making the most commitment. --Press release

rapid access to new technologies for farmers. In developed countries, private companies contribute about half the total R&D spending targeting the needs of farmers, and as much as one-quarter in large emerging economies, such as China, India, and Brazil.

Policy tools to encourage more private R&D in agriculture include reducing restrictions on market participation, encouraging competition, removing onerous regulations, and strengthening intellectual property rights. --Press release

16-year-old with a 100m euro release clause



The 16-year-old has been thrust into the limelight after making history on Saturday, becoming the youngest player in La Liga history to register a goal and an assist in the same game.

Even more impressively, he needed only seven minutes to do so in his team's 5-2 demolition of Valencia.

Just 110 seconds had elapsed when he opened the scoring by meeting Frenkie de Jong's low cross with a confident right-footed strike from 12 yards; five minutes later, he returned the favour by weaving his way into the box and picking out a precise pass for De Jong to convert.

Fati then continued to thrill the 80,000-plus Nou

Camp crowd with a series of skilful thrusts down the left wing, coming close to more goals on several occasions and making it plain that this prodigious teen is poised for greatness.

Fati was born on 30 October 2002 in Guinea-Bissau, and spent the first six years of his life in the African country before moving to Herrera, a tiny town in southern Spain, after his father Bori - a former semi-professional footballer in Guinea-Bissau - found work as a driver for the town's mayor.

The first real sign of just how highly Barca regarded Fati's talents came in July, when much-hyped 16-year-old midfielder Xavi Simons stunned the club by accepting a big-money offer from Paris St-Germain.

Barca responded by handing Fati a new three-year contract with an eye-watering release clause of 100m euros, sending out a clear message to predators: one of La Masia's crown jewels had been stolen, but Simons would be the only one to slip away.

BI-WEEKLY DATA BUNDLES

PACKAGE	PRICE	DATA VOLUME	VALIDITY
BI-WEEKLY	\$ 2	800MB	14 DAYS
BI-WEEKLY	\$ 5	1.7GB	14 DAYS
BI-WEEKLY	\$ 10	3.5GB	14 DAYS
BI-WEEKLY	\$ 12	4.5GB	14 DAYS
BI-WEEKLY	\$ 20	7.5GB	14 DAYS
BI-WEEKLY	\$ 30	10GB	14 DAYS
BI-WEEKLY	\$ 35	12GB	14 DAYS
BI-WEEKLY	\$ 50	18GB	14 DAYS
BI-WEEKLY	\$ 60	22GB	14 DAYS

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David de Gea signs new deal at Old Trafford

Manchester United goalkeeper David de Gea has signed a new contract to stay with the club until 2023.

De Gea, 28, has made 367 United appearances since Sir Alex Ferguson brought him to the club from Atletico Madrid in an £18.9m deal in June 2011.

"Now my future is fixed, all I want is to help this team achieve what I believe we can and win trophies again,

together," said the Spaniard.

"It has been a privilege to spend eight years at this great club."

De Gea, capped 40 times by Spain, helped United win the Premier League title in 2012-13, the FA Cup three seasons



later and both the League Cup and the Europa League in 2016-17.

The Spaniard, who has consistently been linked with a move to Real Madrid in recent seasons, was in the last year of his contract and would have been able to open talks with clubs outside England over a possible move in January.

He came close to joining Real in a £29m move in September 2015, but the deal collapsed because the necessary

paperwork was not submitted in time on the final day of the transfer window.

United and De Gea were in negotiations for more than two years over the new deal with the club making an improved offer in July.

"The opportunity to continue my career at Manchester United is a genuine honour," said De Gea, who has the option to extend the contract for a

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