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Liberia records highest death rate



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Continental News

Rwanda urges wearing of masks at home as well

The Ministry of Health on Saturday, April 18, introduced an additional COVID-19 precautionary directive that urges citizens to wear face masks when at home and going out for essential services or activities.

Dr Daniel Ngamije, Minister of Health said this during an interview with the public broadcaster, Rwanda Television. The Ministry had

previously called on citizens to leave masks for COVID 19 patients as well as health practitioners directly interacting with these patients. However, Ngamije in the interview noted that the compulsory use of face masks has proved to be effective in many countries as far as curbing this pandemic is concerned.

He said: "In addition to other COVID-19 precautionary

measures, we urge citizens to wear face masks when going for essential activities and when at home because they have proved to be effective in preventing this virus worldwide."

The Minister continued to say that: "Beginning with Monday (April 20), local factories will start manufacturing these masks and selling them at an

affordable price, so that citizens can start buying them."

Liberia, Morocco, Guinea Conakry and Kenya are some African countries which have ordered compulsory wearing of masks. South Africa has also encouraged her citizens to wear face masks in public places. As per the World Health Organization (WHO), COVID-19 is primarily transmitted when someone infected with it coughs, speaks or sneezes.

The droplets from the mouth or nose of this person then gets on a surface, and another person gets infected too when he or she touches that surface and touches the nose, mouth or eyes.

The above signifies the encouragement of washing of hands with water and soap or with a hand sanitizer, because they have proved to kill this

Virus, according to WHO.

4 more recover from COVID-19

Meanwhile Rwanda on Saturday confirmed four more recovered cases of COVID-19 and one new positive case from 712 tested samples.

This took the tally of cumulative positive cases to 144, of which 69 are recovered cases.

With no reported fatality since the outbreak, the country is also under a lockdown that will go through April 30. All patients, according to the Ministry, are currently in stable conditions at designated treatment facilities.

In the Ministry's daily updates, it continuously reiterates that patients should facilitate the tracing exercise by disclosing people who came in contact with them. AFP



Govt urges compulsory wearing of masks in public, at home

Boko Haram suspects 'die of poison' in Chad jail

Forty-four suspected Boko Haram militants in Chad have died in detention from apparent poisoning, the country's public prosecutor says.

The men were part of a group of 58 suspects captured during a recent major army operation against the Islamist group around Lake Chad.

An investigation has been launched after four autopsies showed a lethal substance had led to their deaths. The justice minister told AFP the prisoners had not been ill treated.

Djimet Arabi was responding to allegations that the prisoners were placed in a single cell and given no food or water after their transfer to the capital, N'Djamena, on Tuesday. The military offensive was launched after jihadists killed nearly 100 Chadian troops on 23 March during a seven-hour attack on

an island base in Lake Chad.

It was the deadliest attack on the Chad's army by Boko Haram since their insurgency spread across the border from Nigeria several years ago. The

prisoners, who were being held as part of an anti-terrorism investigation, had been found dead on Thursday morning, public prosecutor Youssouf Tom said. "Forty of



Chad's army has been battling Boko Haram for five years

Fake mourners arrested for flouting Kenyan travel ban

Police in Kenya implementing coronavirus restrictions have arrested four people who disguised themselves as mourners taking a body for burial.

They had left the capital, Nairobi, and travelled 370km (about 230 miles) west with an empty coffin in the vehicle before being intercepted, the health minister said on Saturday.

Nearly two weeks ago, travel in and out of Nairobi was restricted, along with another three regions considered to be coronavirus hot spots.

The group of fake mourners had managed to pass through

several checkpoints before suspicious officers in Homa Bay County opened the coffin, Health Minister Mutahi Kagwe said.

The driver later tested positive for Covid-19, the respiratory illness caused by the virus. His three passengers have now been put into quarantine.

The minister said officials were investigating various schemes allegedly being used to circumvent the travel ban, including reports that people had been bribing police at roadblocks. The East African nation has recorded 262 cases of Covid-19, including 12 deaths. BBC

them were buried and the other four were taken to a pathologist, whose report revealed that a lethal substance was consumed, leading to heart problems in some and severe asphyxiation amongst others," he announced on state television on Saturday.

Mr Arabi confirmed to the AFP news agency that investigations were ongoing: "Was it collective suicide or something else? We're still looking for answers."

One detainee, who was taken to hospital on Thursday, had recovered and rejoined the other 13 prisoners who were "still alive and doing very well", the justice minister added.

The army has said its eight-day operation to flush out militants from hideouts on the islands of Lake Chad was successful. An army spokesman was quoted as saying that more than 1,000 jihadists were killed in the vast marshy area, which is surrounded by Chad, Nigeria, Niger and Cameroon. The Boko Haram insurgency began in north-eastern Nigeria more than a decade ago - and the violence has spread to neighbouring countries, killing more than 30,000 people and forcing two million from their homes, according to the UN.

Despite regional efforts to end Boko Haram's campaign of violence, the group has stepped up its attacks in recent months. BBC

EDITORIAL

Bring all of the technicians onboard

THE WOMAN APPOINTED recently by President George Manneh Weah to coordinate the country's COVID-19 fight, Mary T. Broh, has taken the bull by the horn by enlisting key technicians on a national structure to lead the fight.

WE NEED TRAINED and experienced public health practitioners, including doctors, nurses and health care workers to defeat COVID-19. And we hail Madam Broh for her line-up of statisticians and other technocrats to execute the job.

WITH DOCTORS JERRY Brown, Wilehlmina Jallah, Francis Kateh and others being brought onboard, Liberia is surely mobilizing frontline commanders to take this global pandemic head-on.

HOWEVER, WHAT IS needed urgently in this fight is government support, particularly funding, logistics and requisite supplies to dispatch professionals in the field.

WE ARE VERY optimistic that with all hands on deck and proper coordination, divorced of politics, Liberia would, in the words of former NPHIL boss, Tolbert Nyenswah, "get ahead of the curve."

MADAM BROH SHOULD also mobilize County Health Teams across the country, including the 3,000 contact tracers that were actively involved in eradicating Ebola out of Liberia.

SHE WOULD NEED political support at the highest level in order to succeed. Mary has never been a failure. She will not fail in this COVID-19 fight.

ORDINARY LIBERIANS TOO have a role to play in containing and expelling coronavirus out of Liberia, as they did to Ebola in 2015, by observing all preventive health measures.

HOW WE CONDUCT ourselves as a nation in coming months, would demonstrate our sincerity and commitment to defeating the virus and therefore, maintain continuous support from international partners and friendly governments.

THIS IS A fight to save humanity and we need all of our best generals both at home and abroad to join in this war against an invisible and common enemy. With God above and our resolve and resilient to win, victory is certain!

COMMENTARY

By Fernando Henrique Cardoso ,

Ricardo Lagos, Juan Manuel Santos & Ernesto Zedillo

Latin America Confronts the Coronavirus

The challenge posed by the COVID-19 pandemic has no parallel in recent history. The world and the Latin American and Caribbean region cannot afford delayed or inadequate responses. Mutual trust, transparency, and reason - not populism or demagoguery - remain the best guideposts in these uncertain times.

SÃO PAULO/SANTIAGO/BOGOTÁ/MEXICO CITY - The COVID-19 pandemic is a shock of unprecedented magnitude and uncertain duration. The consequences have been catastrophic. If not properly addressed, the crisis could cause one of the most tragic episodes in Latin America's history.

So far, policy responses in our region have been uneven. Several governments reacted promptly, making the protection of public health their primary objective. Sadly, others minimized the risks of the pandemic, misinforming citizens and disregarding both scientific evidence and their own experts' advice. Such leaders chose to pursue populist and divisive politics in the midst of tragedy.

Minimizing the pandemic's death toll must be Latin America's top priority. Policymakers should focus on upgrading health systems, channeling resources to hospitals, temporarily adapting idle infrastructure such as hotels and convention centers, and sharply increasing testing capacity.

Latin American leaders also ought to condemn export controls on medical supplies and other critical resources, and demand increased resources for the World Health Organization, contrary to US President Donald Trump's reckless decision to freeze some \$500 million in WHO funding. Stronger global coordination among health authorities is needed to improve the capacity to conduct tests, treat and isolate patients, and develop a cure and vaccine - the definitive solution to the pandemic.

The economic shock is massive. In addition to the disruption of domestic production, Latin American economies are suffering from falling export volumes and prices, lost income from tourism and remittances, and large capital outflows. The supply shock to much of the economy, coupled with cratering demand, could trigger a contractionary spiral.

To prevent that, bold policies to protect household incomes are essential. This implies cash transfers to those left vulnerable by the crisis, including informal and independent workers who cannot access employment subsidies or unemployment insurance.

Relief to businesses is also indispensable. Subsidies to help firms pay their wage bill, contingent on the maintenance of employment, protect both companies and workers during the crisis and are crucial for a rapid economic recovery when conditions normalize.

If widespread bankruptcies are not prevented, then the pandemic's next victim could be the banking system. At that point the payments system - indeed, entire economies - risk collapse.

Many businesses, particularly small and medium-size enterprises, will suffer significant income losses for the duration of the crisis. Without support, lack of liquidity will soon become a solvency problem. Tax deferrals, loan rollovers, and subsidized credit will not be enough.

This emergency demands unprecedented government credit guarantees to ensure that banks keep lending, as well as temporary regulatory changes to encourage credit expansion. Well-capitalized and well-managed state-owned banks can also play a leading role.

More broadly, while policies will differ across countries, extraordinary fiscal resources will likely be needed to boost recovery everywhere. Governments will need to stimulate employment and economic activity without exacerbating health-related risks.

The problem is that the policy space in Latin America today is even narrower now than it was following the

2008 global financial crisis. Fiscal costs should be offset by budgetary adjustments in low-priority areas. A commitment by governments to correct the larger resulting fiscal deficit within a reasonable period would mitigate the risk of a credit downgrade.

External support for both fiscal accounts and the balance of payments is crucial, especially for Latin America's smaller and less developed countries. If both private firms and governments run bigger deficits, countries' current-account gaps are likely to widen as well. The recent capital outflows from emerging economies - one of the largest capital-flow reversals in the modern history of financial markets - compound the problem.

The associated depreciation of emerging-market currencies can be a destabilizing force. For many economies in the region, far larger official external support will be the only way to cope with these compound shocks.

The International Monetary Fund has an essential role to play here. The IMF must address countries' short-run foreign exchange and fiscal needs, and keep supporting economies through a crisis whose duration remains highly uncertain. The Fund needs more resources and the ability to disburse them rapidly. Latin American governments should unite in calling for a new issue of the IMF's global reserve currency, Special Drawing Rights, totaling SDR1 trillion.

While SDRs are allocated to member countries according to their IMF quotas, a non-proportional allocation could be achieved by creating a common pool overseen by the Fund. In addition, the immediate doubling of the New Arrangements to Borrow would provide the IMF with the needed capacity to attend to the urgent upcoming demand for loans. Finally, because traditional IMF lending programs will not be approved in time, the Fund should increase significantly access to facilities with fast disbursement and low conditionality, such as its Rapid Financing Instrument, or create new pandemic credit facilities.

Major central banks that issue reserve currencies can help by broadening access to swap lines, either directly or indirectly through the IMF or the Bank for International Settlements as intermediaries of central bank liquidity. Domestically, central banks should use all instruments they can, innovating whenever necessary, to provide ample liquidity to financial markets and the economy.

Finally, multilateral development banks (MDBs), such as the World Bank, the Inter-American Development Bank, and the CAF - Development Bank of Latin America, should double the amount of net lending to the region and tap highly liquid global capital markets to provide further budgetary support. In exceptional circumstances and in countries without market access, a debt standstill could complement official lending.

MDBs should also provide countries with guidelines on the various policy areas involved in the crisis response, including their own estimates of COVID-19 morbidity and mortality rates - particularly in countries where governments are downplaying the health threat. Time is of the essence.

The challenge posed by this pandemic has no parallel in recent history. The world and the Latin American and Caribbean region cannot afford delayed or inadequate responses. Mutual trust, transparency, and reason - not populism or demagoguery - remain the best guideposts in these uncertain times. The crisis cannot be an excuse to weaken our hard-won rights. Instead, it should become an opportunity to strengthen democracy in Latin America, and to show it can deliver for citizens.

The New Dawn
FULLY INDEPENDENT

O-PED

By Shlomo Ben-Ami

Why this Pandemic Is Different

From failures of leadership to the rise of conspiracy theories, the COVID-19 crisis resembles past pandemics in myriad ways. Yet it is likely to break the mold in one crucial - and perhaps fateful - respect: rather than upending the established order, it is likely to reinforce the trends that brought us to this point.

TEL AVIV - Long before people and goods were traversing the globe non-stop, pandemics were already an inescapable feature of human civilization. And the tragedy they bring has tended to have a silver lining: perceived as mysterious, meta-historical events, large-scale disease outbreaks have often shattered old beliefs and approaches, heralding major shifts in the conduct of human affairs. But the COVID-19 pandemic may break this pattern.

In many ways, the current pandemic looks a lot like its predecessors. For starters, predictable or not, disease outbreaks have always caught the authorities off guard - and the authorities have often failed to respond quickly and decisively.

Albert Camus depicted this tendency in his novel *The Plague*, and China's government embodied it when it initially suppressed information about the novel coronavirus. US President Donald Trump did the same when he minimized the threat, comparing COVID-19 as recently as last month to seasonal flu. As an official in Camus' novel said, the plague is nothing but "a special type of fever."

Leaders' lack of foresight has often left people with only one real defense from disease outbreaks: social distancing. As Daniel Defoe noted in *A Journal of the Plague Year*, his book about the bubonic plague outbreak in London in 1665, the municipal government banned events and gatherings, closed schools, and enforced quarantines.

Nearly two millennia before London's Great Plague, during the epidemic that killed at least one-third of Athenians near the end of the Peloponnesian War, the Greek historian Thucydides observed that if people made contact with the sick, "they lost their lives." As a result, many "died alone," and funeral customs were "thrown into confusion." And, owing to the high death toll, the dead were often "buried in any way possible."

During the COVID-19 crisis, lockdowns and other social-distancing protocols have similarly prevented people from visiting their dying loved ones and upended funeral traditions. In China, families are reportedly encouraged to bury their dead quickly and quietly. Satellite images show mass graves being dug in Iran. New York City officials have also ramped up mass burials, intended for those who have no next of kin or families who can afford a funeral. Some cemeteries in London have run out of graves.¹

Another parallel between the current pandemic and its predecessors is the tendency to embrace experimental palliatives. During the pandemic of so-called Spanish flu a century ago, scientists blamed bacterial infections, and designed treatments accordingly. We know now that influenza is caused by a virus; no bacterial vaccines could protect against it.

Of course, researchers working on COVID-19 have a much more advanced understanding of disease. But, as we await a bespoke cure or vaccine, existing antivirals - such as those long used for malaria - are being tested, with mixed results. The use of one such drug, chloroquine, has raised concerns after patients receiving it showed signs of heart-related complications.¹

And then there are the bogus cures that invariably emerge - "infallible preventive pills," as Defoe called them. Today, charlatans - aided by social media - have made similarly false and dangerous claims, suggesting that anything from snorting cocaine to drinking bleach can protect against COVID-19. Trump himself has touted hydroxychloroquine as a potential "game changer," despite the lack of testing - prompting one couple to attempt to self-medicate. The husband died; his wife barely survived.

Imagined culprits behind the COVID-19 crisis include radiation from 5G technology, the US military, the Chinese military, and - no surprise - Jews. Iran's state-controlled media has warned people not to use any vaccine developed by Israeli scientists. Publications in Turkey and Palestine have defined COVID-19 as an Israeli biological weapon. White supremacists in Austria, Switzerland, and the US have blamed the Jewish financier and philanthropist George Soros, who they believe hopes to thin out the world population and cash in on a vaccine.¹

Despite these similarities, the COVID-19 pandemic is likely to stand out in a crucial way: it is unlikely to upend the established order. The Antonine and Justinian Plagues encouraged the spread of Christianity throughout Europe. The Black Death drove people toward a less religious, more humanistic view of the world - a shift that would lead to the Renaissance. The Spanish flu prompted uprisings, massive labor strikes, and anti-imperialist protests; in India, where millions died, it helped to galvanize the independence movement.¹

The current pandemic, by contrast, is more likely to reinforce three preexisting - and highly destructive - trends: deglobalization, unilateralism, and authoritarian surveillance capitalism. Almost immediately, calls for reducing dependence on global value chains - already gaining traction before the crisis - began to intensify. Efforts by the European Union to devise a common strategy have again exposed the bloc's old divisions. Trump has now decided to suspend US funding allocated to the World Health Organization. And, under the cover of the fight for life, authorities beyond just China or Russia are trampling on liberties and invading personal privacy.¹

Two world wars have shown that a global order organized around egocentric nationalism is incompatible with peace and security. The pandemic has highlighted the urgent need for a new balance between the nation-state and supranational institutions. Barring that, the devastation wrought by COVID-19 will only increase.

OPINION

By Hans Bergstrom

The Grim Truth About the "Swedish Model"

As the coronavirus pandemic has swept the planet, Sweden has stood out among Western democracies by pursuing a "low-scale" lockdown. Whether this approach speaks to a unique strength of Swedish society, as opposed to bad judgment, can be determined by comparing Sweden's COVID-19 rate with its neighbors'.

STOCKHOLM - Does Sweden's decision to spurn a national lockdown offer a distinct way to fight COVID-19 while maintaining an open society? The country's unorthodox response to the coronavirus is popular at home and has won praise in some quarters abroad. But it also has contributed to one of the world's highest COVID-19 death rates, exceeding that of the United States.

In Stockholm, bars and restaurants are filled with people enjoying the spring sun after a long, dark winter. Schools and gyms are open. Swedish officials have offered public-health advice but have imposed few sanctions. No official guidelines recommend that people wear masks.

During the pandemic's early stages, the government and most commentators proudly embraced this "Swedish model," claiming that it was built on Swedes' uniquely high levels of "trust" in institutions and in one another. Prime Minister Stefan Löfven made a point of appealing to Swedes' self-discipline, expecting them to act responsibly without requiring orders from authorities.

According to the World Values Survey, Swedes do tend to display a unique combination of trust in public institutions and extreme individualism. As sociologist Lars Trägårdh has put it, every Swede carries his own policeman on his shoulder.

But let's not turn causality on its head. The government did not consciously design a Swedish model for confronting the pandemic based on trust in the population's ingrained sense of civic responsibility. Rather, actions were shaped by bureaucrats and then defended after the fact as a testament to Swedish virtue.

In practice, the core task of managing the outbreak fell to a single man: state epidemiologist Anders Tegnell at the National Institute of Public Health. Tegnell approached the crisis with his own set of strong convictions about the virus, believing that it would not spread from China, and later, that it would be enough to trace individual cases coming from abroad. Hence, the thousands of Swedish families returning from late-February skiing in the Italian Alps were strongly advised to return to work and school if not visibly sick, even if family members were infected. Tegnell argued that there were no signs of community transmission in Sweden, and therefore no need for more general mitigation measures. Despite Italy's experience, Swedish ski resorts remained open for vacationing and partying Stockholmers.

Between the lines, Tegnell indicated that eschewing draconian policies to stop the spread of the virus would enable Sweden gradually to achieve herd immunity. This strategy, he stressed, would be more sustainable for society.

Through it all, Sweden's government remained passive. That partly reflects a unique feature of the country's political system: a strong separation of powers between central government ministries and independent agencies. And, in "the fog of war," it was also convenient for Löfven to let Tegnell's agency take charge. Its seeming confidence in what it was doing enabled the government to offload responsibility during weeks of uncertainty. Moreover, Löfven likely wanted to demonstrate his trust in "science and facts," by not - like US President Donald Trump - challenging his experts.

It should be noted, though, that the state epidemiologist's policy choice has been strongly criticized by independent experts in Sweden. Some 22 of the country's most prominent professors in infectious diseases and epidemiology published a commentary in *Dagens Nyheter* calling on Tegnell to resign and appealing to the government to take a different course of action.

By mid-March, and with wide community spread, Löfven was forced to take a more active role. Since then, the government has been playing catch-up. From March 29, it prohibited public gatherings of more than 50 people, down from 500, and added sanctions for noncompliance. Then, from April 1, it barred visits to nursing homes, after it had become clear that the virus had hit around half of Stockholm's facilities for the elderly.

Sweden's approach turned out to be misguided for at least three reasons. However virtuous Swedes may be, there will always be free riders in any society, and when it comes to a highly contagious disease, it doesn't take many to cause major harm. Moreover, Swedish authorities only gradually became aware of the possibility of asymptomatic transmission, and that infected individuals are most contagious before they start showing symptoms. And, third, the composition of the Swedish population has changed.

After years of extremely high immigration from Africa and the Middle East, 25% of Sweden's population - 2.6 million of a total population of 10.2 million - is of recent non-Swedish descent. The share is even higher in the Stockholm region. Immigrants from Somalia, Iraq, Syria, and Afghanistan are highly overrepresented among COVID-19 deaths. This has been attributed partly to a lack of information in immigrants' languages. But a more important factor seems to be the housing density in some immigrant-heavy suburbs, enhanced by closer physical proximity between generations.

It is too soon for a full reckoning of the effects of the "Swedish model." The COVID-19 death rate is nine times higher than in Finland, nearly five times higher than in Norway, and more than twice as high as in Denmark. To some degree, the numbers might reflect Sweden's much larger immigrant population, but the stark disparities with its Nordic neighbors are nonetheless striking. Denmark, Norway, and Finland all imposed rigid lockdown policies early on, with strong, active political leadership.

USAID Infectious Disease Detection and Surveillance (IDDS) Project
ICF REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS
For Supply of Laboratory Equipment, Reagents and Consumables

BACKGROUND:

For 50 years ICF has partnered with clients to transform their biggest challenges into even bigger opportunities. With a continued focus on innovation in areas including technology, policy, and engagement, we will keep making big things possible for our clients and the communities we serve.

Under the Global Health Security Agenda (GHS) 2024 objectives (supporting adherence to international human and animal health standards, collaboratively identifying and addressing gaps and priorities in global health security, and advancing sustainable financing for global health security), the USAID Infectious Disease Detection and Surveillance (IDDS) project in Liberia plans to strengthen diagnostic networks which are critical to achieving the GHS goal of disease detection and rapid response working in close partnership with other U.S. Government partners and relevant stakeholders. IDDS is providing technical support and participate in relevant One Health forums to help continue Liberia's efforts to develop multi-sectoral capacity to prevent, detect, and respond to priority zoonotic diseases.

PURPOSE:

ICF Macro, Inc. acting for and on behalf of USAID Infectious Disease Detection and Surveillance (IDDS) invites proposals from interested parties, companies/vendors on their ability as qualified vendors to provide quality assured laboratory equipment, reagents and consumables. The vendor should have demonstrated experience in supply, training and customer support for all equipment and supplies. They should also show records of abiding to industry standards. The vendor should have traceable references and be in good standing with wholesale supplier(s) or manufacturer(s) of medical equipment, reagents, and consumables. ICF Macro, Inc. intends to develop a strong professional relationship with the awarded supplier with an integrated and comprehensive diagnostic network approach.

EQUIPMENT AND SUPPLIES REQUIRED:

In an effort to improve service delivery to its clients, ICF Macro, Inc. is looking for the following laboratory equipment, reagents and consumables that meet the international standards: (1) Bacteriology equipment (2) Bacteriology culture media, (3) bacteriology test reagents and antisera, (4) Quality control strains, and antibiotic discs for susceptibility testing, and (5) Consumables and supplies.

NATURE OF THE OFFER:

The Request For Proposal (RFP) is divided into three lots. Offers should be submitted separately for each of the lot. A vendor can submit proposal(s) for one, two or all three lots.

Lot Number	Item Category	Item Description	County (Delivery Point)
Lot 001	Laboratory Equipment	Bacteriology equipment	Tellewoyen, Phebe and G.W. Harley Hospitals
Lot 002	Reagents	Bacteriology culture media, bacteriology test reagents and antisera, quality control strains, and antibiotic discs for susceptibility testing.	Tellewoyen and Phebe Hospitals
Lot 003	Consumables	Laboratory consumables and other medical and laboratory related supplies	Tellewoyen and Phebe Hospitals



For RFP Documents, Questions and Responses Contact:
 Ellen Munemo, IDDS Liberia Team Lead
 USAID Infectious Disease Detection and Surveillance (IDDS) Project
 Between 15th & 16th Streets (seaside), Payne Avenue,
 Sinkor, Monrovia, Liberia
 +231 778 163 510
 Email: Ellen.Munemo@icf.com | www.icf.com

The Deadline for Submitting Proposals is @ 5:00 pm, Friday, May 8, 2020

TI wants IMF to includes anti-corruption measures in COVID-19 packages

The International Monetary Fund should include transparency and anti-corruption measures in coronavirus-related emergency relief programs to ensure that the billions of dollars it is disbursing to dozens of countries help the most vulnerable, Transparency International, Human Rights Watch and Global Witness said Friday in a letter to the IMF Executive Board.

"The urgent need to support countries in their efforts during the pandemic makes transparency and accountability in government spending critically important," said Delia Ferreira Rubio, Chair, Transparency International. "The crisis requires the IMF to make funds available as quickly as possible, but it shouldn't abandon its commitment to fighting corruption. The scale of the crisis raises the risks and dangers of the theft of public money that should be used to save lives and rebuild livelihoods."

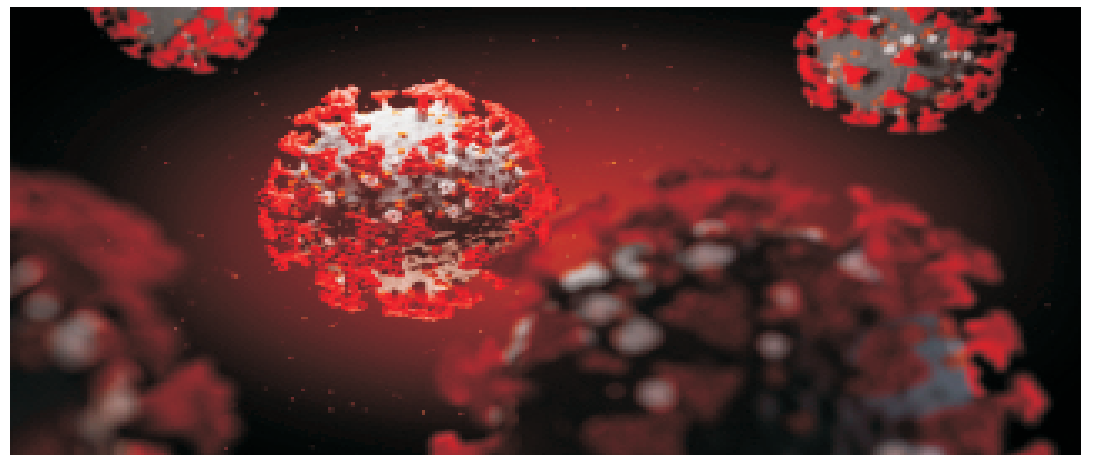
Over 90 countries have already requested emergency assistance, the highest number in the IMF's 75-year history. Unlike with the fund's standard programs, emergency funds are generally disbursed in lump sums, with limited, if any, transparency, conditions, or reviews.

In recent years, the IMF has put a renewed emphasis on combatting

help drive anti-corruption reforms. The pandemic is wreaking havoc with public health and the economies of nations, so it is right for the IMF to step in to help - but we call for the Fund's leadership to make sure that rapid disbursements do not come at the expense of basic transparency and sensible anti-corruption measures, that should be required of recipient countries."

Corruption's drain on public resources always harms governments' ability to provide adequate health care, education, and other rights, the groups said. During this crisis, it can mean the difference between life and death; adequate food or hunger; a house or homelessness. Moreover, the IMF can systematically include basic measures to reduce the risks of mismanagement and corruption without compromising the speed and flexibility the crisis demands. The organizations proposed four such measures:

- IMF transparency. The fund should publish all information related to programs on its website as soon as possible and signal its continued commitment to good governance in high-level public statements and private meetings with governments.
- Transparency and accountability in public procurement. To mitigate risks such as hidden



corruption as part of a broader recognition that resilient economies require good governance, inclusive growth, and strong social protections. In April 2018, it adopted a new framework that committed the fund to systematically address corruption risks in its surveillance and lending.

"The IMF's pledge to unleash up to \$1 trillion to help governments in the wake of the coronavirus pandemic holds extraordinary potential to save lives and protect the people hardest hit," said Sarah Saadoun, Business and Human Rights Researcher, Human Rights Watch. "With lives on the line, it is critical for the IMF to maintain its commitment to stem corruption so that people can hold their governments accountable for where the money goes."

Dramatic increases in the amounts and speed of spending, as well as distractions or breakdowns that interfere with oversight mechanisms, can allow powerful actors to take advantage of the crisis for their own benefit. Even at this early stage of the pandemic, there are dozens of media reports of corruption and other criminal activities related to COVID-19 spending.

Simon Taylor, Founder at Global Witness, said: "Recent years have seen the IMF creatively use its leverage to

contracts, overpricing, and collusion, governments should be provided with support and commit, at a minimum, to: (1) publish all public contracts; (2) use open and competitive bidding, and strictly limit the use of emergency non-competitive processes; (3) publish the names and beneficial ownership information of companies awarded contracts; and (4) empower anti-monopoly agencies, where they exist, to monitor market conditions in critical sectors to avoid collusion or overpricing.

• Auditing by government and independent monitors. Governments should commit to make all information on how emergency relief funds are spent available to internal auditors and, as soon as practicable, to independent auditors. Priority should be given to critical areas such as health, public procurement, infrastructure and social security expenditures.

• Implementing and strengthening existing anti-corruption and anti-money laundering frameworks. The Fund should identify and seek to strengthen gaps in such frameworks, including encouraging G20 states and major financial centers to tackle these shortcomings.

MORE HEADLINE NEWS

MORE HEADLINE NEWS

Americans rush to leave Liberia

The United States Embassy near Monrovia appears to be overwhelmed by requests from U.S. citizens here to be repatriated home in the wake of the rapid increase of the COVID-19 cases in Liberia. "We have received

time, there is no confirmed flight", an embassy statement posted on its website last week reads.

The U.S. Embassy here has been involved in gradual repatriation of Americans in Liberia since March through chartered flights since the

Liberia on Saturday, March 21, after nearly four years at the helm of the U.S. Embassy in Monrovia.

In a farewell message dispatched subsequently from Washington, D.C. dated March 25, to Liberians, Ambassador Elder said, "Let me begin by saying that I am very moved by your expressions of concern for my health. I am quite well, but over the past 15 years, I have had 3 surgeries on my lungs. With the closure of international air routes, the U.S. government and I decided that this was the right time to transition the leadership of our Embassy, which had been anticipated for this May or June. The Embassy's very experienced Deputy Chief of Mission, Alyson Grunder, will serve as Chargé d'affaires until there is a new U.S. Ambassador."

On March 14, the Department of State authorized the departure of U.S. personnel and family members from any diplomatic or consular post in the world who have been medically determined to be at higher risk of a poor outcome if exposed to COVID-19.

The exercise began with

▶ CONT'D ON PAGE 10



numerous requests for information regarding repatriation; our team is working to identify transportation options for U.S. citizens seeking to return to the United States. At this

Roberts International Airport shut down to the public as part measures instituted by the Government of Liberia prevent spread of the COVID-19.

U.S. Ambassador to Liberia Christine Elder departed

GoL reduces gas, fuel prices

The Ministry of Commerce, has in consultation with the management at the Liberia Petroleum Refinery Company (LPRC) reached a decision reducing prices for gas (PMS) and Fuel (AGO), with immediate effect.

According to a press release from the Ministry of Commerce, the price of

equivalent of LD\$580.

Additionally, the Ministry in consultation with LPRC, has reduced the wholesale price for fuel to US\$3.32, and further reduced the retail pump price for fuel to US\$3.50 or its equivalent of LR\$690.

The Ministry of Commerce says it uses the Central Bank of Liberia (CBL) exchange rate of US\$1 to LD\$197 to set the



gasoline has been reduced by US\$35 cent while the price of fuel has been reduced by US\$30 cent, respectively.

As a result of the reductions announced Sunday, 19 April by the Ministry in consultation with LPRC, the wholesale price for gas is now US\$2.77, while retail pump price for gas has been dropped to US\$2.95 or its

various prices announced in the release.

The ministry indicates that it is closely monitoring the new price circular to ensure that importers do not undercut fellow competitors on the market. It concludes that the new price circular has already taken effect. -Press release

Lonestar Cell MTN unveils Y'ello Hope package to help fight COVID-19

Lonestar Cell MTN has unveiled its 'Y'ello Hope Package' to help the government in its efforts to combat the spread of COVID-19 in Liberia. The company said that as the nation braces for immense human, economic, and social cost of the COVID-19 pandemic, they want to reassure everyone that management and staff are committed to supporting the efforts to contain the outbreak and help the nation stay connected.

Commenting on the company's efforts in response to the outbreak, Lonestar Cell MTN's CEO, UcheOfodile, said, "COVID-19 is an unknown territory for all of us and a test of our collective strength. With our Y'ello Hope package, we are offering support to the Government's efforts to track and monitor COVID-19 contacts, communicate and raise awareness on precautionary measures to stop the spread of COVID-19 in our country and bring relief to those who need it the most. We understand that during



this extraordinary time, it is vital that all of us stay connected to the people we love and to the tools we need to keep life moving in our 'new normal'."

The Y'ello Hope Package includes three main categories: Informing people is being done via sending of SMSs regularly with health tips, CRBT for people to hear preventive tips when they call someone on the

Lonestar Cell MTN network, USSD on *445# with tips and contact info for MOH/NPHIL, and Social media posts with tips, Radio PSAs.

The company said the second category is easing the cost burden for people. This package includes a 200 LRD package for customers, valid for 7 days which gives subscribers a daily allocation of voice, data and SMS for

work and staying in touch with friends and family, 10 free SMSs a day on *170# to help people stay in touch at no cost to them, Free MoMo person-to-person transfers to make it easier for people to avoid handling cash and send money directly to other people, Free MoMo person-to-merchant payments to enable/facilitate payments for goods and services; Ayoba, Instant messaging platform for people to chat, share photos and videos and more at no data cost on the Lonestar Cell MTN network; Free push-and-pull with banks, (Transfer money from bank accounts to mobile money wallets and vice versa), Zero-rated access to educational sites.

The company also added that it has embarked upon helping the government/MOH/NPHIL-Donation of 500 phones to

MOH/NPHIL through the VP's office to be used for contact tracing and for people in quarantine to stay in touch with friends and family, CUG for health workers to allow over 100 health workers call each other,, Toll-free line for people to call for help (4455 and 088000664), Enforcing temp checks and hand-washing at our offices, etc and Sanitizers for all workstations in its offices.

It said Lonestar Cell MTN employees are also helping to slow down the rate of infections with more than 80 percent of staff working from home.

The company said it understands how vital reliable telecommunications services are during this period. The company has taken necessary steps to ensure that services remain available without disruption for customers.

MORE HEADLINE NEWS MORE HEADLINE NEWS

Hundreds homeless across Montserrado

By Ben P. Wese

A ravaging storm has made hundreds of residents homeless in towns across Montserrado County, worsening victims' conditions in a county placed under lockdown as part of measures by Liberian

Saturday, 18 April, there were outcries by victims over entire rooftops of their houses and school facilities being completely removed in some affected communities, leaving them stranded.

A heavy downpour that night also flooded other homes,

Barnerville and other places across the county.

In the wake of the disaster, the government here has placed building material stores among the essential businesses allowed to operate for a prescribed time during the lockdown to afford victims the opportunity to purchase materials to renovate their homes.

Visiting some of the affected communities during the early morning hours on Saturday, our reporter saw several victims collecting their belongings from roofless buildings to pack them in nearby homes which have temporarily offered to host the homeless.

According to Sarah Geeplay, one of the victims in the Kebbah Community, the entire roof of her house got damaged, lamenting that it is very difficult for her family to immediately repair the damaged roof due to the lack of money while going through a lockdown in the country.

"As you can see, the storm destroyed my house and right now we don't have any money on us to say we will fix the roof today or the soonest possible time," Sarah tells our



authorities in combating coronavirus which has infected 91 and killed eight persons.

Following the devastating night - time incident early

compelling some victims to contemplate on relocating.

There were calls over the weekend for humanitarian assistance and government support for victims in Gardnerville, New Georgia,

▶ CONT'D ON PAGE 11

Building Material stores get greenlight to operate

Following last week's storm disaster in Monrovia and parts adjacent, the Government of Liberia has ordered all building material stores in the country to be placed in the Essential Business Category, and allowed to open to the public from 8A.M. to 2PM daily except

The government says it is assessing the nature of the damage in order to make interventions in designated areas where it is deemed that the destruction were heaviest and affected the already vulnerable population.

According to Information Minister Eugene Nagbe, the



Minister Lenn Eugene Nagbe

Sundays.

The Government of Liberia through the Disaster Management Agency empathizes with Liberians who were hugely affected by the overnight storm that has caused devastation in several neighborhoods across Monrovia and surrounding counties.

decision by the government is necessary to allow affected residents to buy needed supplies in order to take care of repair works. However, the authorities warn that anyone caught hoarding building materials during this period will face full weight of the law.

-Press Release

I'm not victim of COVID -19

-Blama

By E. J. Nathaniel Daygbor

The man who was pronounced as Liberia's index case of the novel Coronavirus, Nathaniel Blama, has walked out of quarantine center here, after health authorities declared him a healthy man following medication and 21-day observation period, saying that he's not a victim of the COVID-19 and should not be stigmatized by the public.

Mr. Blama is the suspended executive director of the Environment Protection Agency, who imported the deadly virus from Switzerland in March and became the index case here. President Weah suspended him indefinitely for refusal to be quarantined at the Roberts International Airport upon arrival.

However, he was released by health authorities from quarantine on April 18, 2020 to his family after testing negative and spending 14 extra days of observation.

Blama was certificated by the Ministry of Health along



with two others as proof that they have recovered fully and are now negative of the novel corona virus. He is one of seven persons to have recovered from the virus in Liberia so far.

Narrating his ordeal, Blamadetails that when he was contacted by health authorities about his illness, some people projected him as someone who had gone to Europe for the Corona Virus and people attempted attacking him and his home.

Currently, through the Ministry of Justice, armed officers from the Liberia National Police are deployed at his Cabral Estate residence in Monrovia.

Speaking to the NewDawn over the weekend at home, he said being an index case for the country, his first few days in hospital, health workers were very afraid to treat him but later they became friends.

He said the virus comes like

a common cold, with extreme coughing that affects both sides of the ribs and causes serious pains in the lungs.

"It starts like a common cold with coughs, sneezing and it treats you like you have four plus malaria. The feeling is bad but the best thing is to seek early medical treatment and early you start the better for you," he explained.

He has since promised to join national awareness campaign here to sensitize the public about the killer virus in

across Liberia.

"I rather be stigmatized and live than to die. Stigmatization is a mindset and interestingly, I don't have such thinking. It is better and great to be perceived as stigmatized and live and the survival can serve as hope to others who are faced with the COVID-19"

Blama has urged citizens to voluntarily avail themselves for testing because according to him, the sooner you know your status, the better it will be. -
Editing by Jonathan Browne

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Français

Coronavirus : les Chercheurs ivoiriens préoccupés par la recherche d'un remède

Trouver le remède du coronavirus est l'une des préoccupations des chercheurs, notamment ceux de la Côte d'Ivoire qui ont proposé un plan de riposte.

Ce plan de riposte a été présenté, vendredi, par le ministre de l'Enseignement supérieur et de la Recherche scientifique, Dr MabriToikeusse, lors d'une conférence de presse tenue à

l'université Nangui Abrogoua d'Abobo-Adjamé.

Pour le ministre de l'Enseignement supérieur de la recherche scientifique, "il faut être attentif à la surveillance épidémiologique, au séquençage et à l'apport de la pharmacopée africaine", face aux interrogations que soulève la pandémie tant au plan épidémiologique, socio-anthropologique que thérapeutique.

Dans ce plan de riposte, les chercheurs ivoiriens proposent la mise en place d'un réseau africain sur les maladies virales humaines, animales et végétales, notamment lorsque les virus sont hautement pathogènes.

Au niveau socio-écologique et anthropologique, ils souhaitent que des enquêtes soient réalisées pour cerner

▶ CONT'D ON PAGE 9



Le Libéria parmi les pays qui bénéficieront de l'allègement de la dette du FMI

Le Rwanda, le Burkina, le Mali, la Guinée, le Libéria ou encore le Bénin ont été retenus dans la liste des pays qui bénéficieront d'un allègement de la dette du Fonds Monétaire International.

Les pays concernés sont les pays membres qui sont jugés les plus pauvres et vulnérables en cette période

de crise sanitaire mondiale.

"Ils recevront ainsi des dons qui couvriront leurs obligations envers le FMI pour une phase initiale de six mois, ce qui leur permettra de consacrer une plus grande partie de leurs faibles ressources financières aux soins médicaux et autres efforts de secours d'urgence vitale", soutient Kristalina Georgieva, Directrice Générale du FMI.

Cet allègement de la dette passe par le Fonds fiduciaire d'assistance et de riposte aux catastrophes (fonds fiduciaire ARC) qui permet au Fonds d'accorder un allègement de dette sous forme de dons aux pays les plus pauvres et les plus vulnérables frappés par une catastrophe naturelle ou de santé publique aux conséquences désastreuses.

Le Fonds fiduciaire a actuellement "une capacité de 500 millions de dollars de ressources immédiatement disponibles, y compris les 185 millions de dollars promis récemment par le Royaume-Uni et les 100 millions de dollars fournis par le Japon", a précisé le FMI.

"La Chine et les Pays-Bas se sont aussi engagés sur d'importantes contributions. J'encourage d'autres donateurs à nous aider à renflouer le fonds et à augmenter notre capacité à fournir un allègement supplémentaire de la dette pour deux années pleines aux membres les plus pauvres du

▶ CONT'D ON PAGE 9

Éditorial

Amenez tous les techniciens à bord

La femme récemment nommée par le président George Manneh Weah pour coordonner la lutte contre le COVID-19, Mary T. Broh, a pris le taureau par les cornes en enrôlant des techniciens clés dans une structure nationale pour mener la lutte.

Nous avons besoin de professionnels de la santé publique formés et expérimentés, y compris des médecins, des infirmières et des travailleurs de la santé pour vaincre COVID-19. Et nous saluons Madame Broh pour sa formation de statisticiens et d'autres technocrates pour exécuter le travail.

Avec l'arrivée des médecins Jerry Brown, Wilehlmina Jallah, Francis Kateh et d'autres, le Libéria mobilise sûrement les commandants de première ligne pour affronter de front cette pandémie mondiale.

Cependant, ce qui est nécessaire de toute urgence dans ce combat, c'est le soutien du gouvernement, en particulier le financement, la logistique et les fournitures nécessaires pour envoyer des professionnels sur le terrain.

Nous sommes très optimistes qu'avec les mains sur le pont et une bonne coordination et sans interférence politique, le Libéria, selon les mots de l'ancien patron de NPHIL, Tolbert Nyenswah, "remportera la victoire face à cet ennemi tueur".

Madame Broh devrait également mobiliser les équipes régionales de santé à travers le pays, y compris les 3000 traceurs de contact qui ont activement participé à l'éradication d'Ebola du Libéria.

Elle aura besoin d'un soutien politique au plus haut niveau pour réussir. Mary n'a jamais été un échec. Elle n'échouera pas dans ce combat contre COVID-19.

Les Libériens ordinaires ont également un rôle à jouer pour contenir et expulser les coronavirus du Libéria, comme ils l'ont fait pour Ebola en 2015, en observant toutes les mesures de santé préventives.

La façon dont nous nous comporterons en tant que nation au cours des prochains mois démontrera notre sincérité et notre engagement à vaincre le virus et, par conséquent, maintiendra le soutien continu de partenaires internationaux et des gouvernements amis.

C'est un combat pour sauver l'humanité et nous avons besoin de tous nos meilleurs généraux, au pays et à l'étranger, pour participer à cette guerre contre un ennemi invisible et commun. Avec Dieu au-dessus et notre détermination et notre résilience pour gagner, la victoire est certaine !



Dr. Mosoka Fallah

Français

Le Libéria parmi les pays qui bénéficieront

au mieux la représentation sociale des populations face au Covid-19 et que les messages soient diversifiés selon les sites tout en gérant les crises potentielles liées à l'insécurité, à l'instabilité sociale, etc.

Au niveau des études épistémologique, biologique et environnementale, les chercheurs ivoiriens préconisent les dépistages réguliers des acteurs de première ligne, la sensibilisation des éleveurs à l'utilisation et au port des masques, et au changement régulier de tenues de travail.

Ils demandent également de veiller à une surveillance scrupuleuse des animaux d'élevage, notamment au niveau des eaux, et de procéder au diagnostic des études de séquençage sur le virus en circulation en Côte d'Ivoire. Au niveau de la recherche clinique, le ministre MabriToikeusse et ses collaborateurs proposent la mise en œuvre d'un essai

contrôlé et multicentrique au niveau sous-régional avec l'implication des pays ayant proposé des échantillons tout en mutualisant les essais cliniques en cours.

Au niveau de l'apport de la médecine traditionnelle et des substances naturelles, la mise au point par les chercheurs et leur participation au programme national de la médecine traditionnelle doivent être prises en compte.

« Mon département est à la tâche dans la lutte contre le Covid-19 », a rassuré le ministre Mabri, félicitant l'ensemble des acteurs impliqués dans la lutte et les partenaires qui ont exprimé leur disponibilité à accompagner le ministère de l'Enseignement supérieur et de la Recherche scientifique.

Il a enfin invité toute la population à s'engager au côté du gouvernement en respectant les mesures barrières et les recommandations en vue de réduire la propagation du Covid-19.

Le Libéria parmi les pays qui bénéficieront

FMI", a exhorté Kristalina Georgieva, la Directrice générale FMI.

Les pays qui bénéficieront d'un allègement du service de leur dette sont les suivants : Afghanistan, Bénin, Burkina Faso, Comores, Gambie, Guinée, Guinée Bissau, Haïti, Îles Solomon, Libéria, Madagascar, Malawi, Mali, Mozambique, Népal, Niger, République centrafricaine, République démocratique du Congo, Rwanda, Sao Tomé-et-Principe, Sierra Leone,

Tadjikistan, Tchad, Togo et Yémen.

Cette nouvelle est accueillie de façon mitigée en Côte d'Ivoire, entre l'occasion manquée de se voir alléger la dette auprès du FMI et le sentiment de ne plus être considérée comme faisant partie des pays les plus pauvres...

Dans la région de la CEDEAO, seulement cinq pays n'ont pas été retenus. Il s'agit du Ghana, du Sénégal, du Nigeria, de la Côte d'Ivoire et du Cap-Vert.

Etat d'urgence prolongé à cause du Covid19

Le parlement libérien a adopté vendredi une résolution approuvant le prolongement de l'état d'urgence pour prévenir la propagation du coronavirus. Dans leur déclaration commune adoptée vendredi, le Sénat et la Chambre basse de l'Assemblée nationale ont prolongé l'état d'urgence, initialement prévu pour 21 jours, à 60 jours en raison de la vague croissante d'infections par la maladie dans le pays.

S'exprimant après l'adoption de la résolution, le président de la Chambre des

représentants, Bhofal Chambers a déclaré que leur action avait pour but d'empêcher une plus grande propagation de la maladie.

Les autorités sanitaires libériennes ont annoncé vendredi que le pays compte désormais 76 cas confirmés de coronavirus, dont sept morts.

Dans le même temps, la législature bicamérale a approuvé la proposition du président Weah d'allouer 25 millions de dollars dans le budget national pour la fourniture de nourriture aux citoyens dans les 15 subdivisions du pays.

COMMENTAIRE

Par Fernando Henrique Cardoso, Ricardo Lagos, Juan Manuel Santos & Ernesto Zedillo

L'Amérique latine face au coronavirus

SÃO PAULO/SANTIAGO/BOGOTA/MEXICO - La pandémie du Covid-19 est un choc d'une ampleur sans précédent et dont on ne sait combien il durera. Les conséquences sont catastrophiques. Si l'on n'y répond rationnellement, la crise pourrait être cause d'un des épisodes les plus tragiques de l'histoire de l'Amérique latine.

Jusqu'à présent, les réponses politiques se sont avérées, dans notre région, inégales. Plusieurs gouvernements ont réagi sans délai, se fixant pour objectif principal de protéger la santé publique. D'autres ont malheureusement minimisé les risques de la pandémie, divulgué de fausses informations et négligé les données scientifiques comme les conseils de leurs propres experts. Ces dirigeants choisissent, en pleine tragédie, de mener une politique populiste de discorde.

Limiter le nombre de morts dus à la pandémie doit être aujourd'hui la priorité absolue de l'Amérique latine. Les décideurs politiques doivent consacrer leurs efforts à la modernisation des systèmes de santé, à l'équipement des hôpitaux, à l'ouverture temporaire d'infrastructures de fortune comme les hôtels ou les palais des congrès, et au renforcement rapide des capacités de dépistage.

Les dirigeants d'Amérique latine devraient aussi condamner les contrôles des exportations sur le matériel médical et les ressources de première nécessité, en même temps qu'exiger que soient alloués à l'Organisation mondiale de la santé des moyens supplémentaires, contrairement à la décision irresponsable prise par le président des États-Unis Donald Trump de geler quelque 500 millions de dollars destinés au financement de l'OMS. Une coordination renforcée, au niveau mondial, des autorités de santé est indispensable à l'amélioration des capacités de dépistage, de traitement et d'isolement des patients, ainsi qu'au développement de remèdes et à la découverte d'un vaccin - seule solution définitive à la pandémie.

Le choc économique est énorme. Outre la perturbation de leur production intérieure, les économies d'Amérique latine subissent la chute des volumes et des prix de leurs exportations, la perte des revenus du tourisme et de ceux liés aux transferts de fonds des travailleurs émigrés, à quoi s'ajoutent des fuites massives de capitaux. Au choc de l'offre dont souffre une bonne part de l'économie s'ajoute la plongée de la demande, ce qui pourrait enclencher une spirale contractionniste.

Pour l'empêcher, des mesures hardies, afin de protéger les revenus des ménages, sont essentielles. Elles impliquent des transferts d'argent liquide vers celles et ceux que la crise fragilise, notamment vers les travailleurs indépendants ou issus du secteur informel, qui n'ont accès ni aux aides à l'emploi ni l'assurance chômage.

Il est également nécessaire de soulager les entreprises. Des subventions pour les aider à payer les salaires, indispensables au maintien de l'emploi, les protégeront autant que leurs employés durant la crise et sont le gage d'une reprise rapide de l'économie lorsque la situation se normalisera. Si les faillites généralisées ne peuvent être évitées, alors la prochaine victime de la pandémie pourrait être le système bancaire. À ce moment-là, le système des paiements - c'est-à-dire des économies entières - risquerait de s'effondrer.

De nombreuses activités, notamment les petites et moyennes entreprises, vont souffrir durement des

pertes de revenu pendant la durée de la crise. Si elles ne sont pas soutenues, le manque de liquidité deviendra bientôt un problème de solvabilité. Les reports d'impôts, les renouvellements des crédits et les emprunts aidés ne suffiront pas.

Cette urgence exige des garanties de crédit sans précédent, consenties par la puissance publique afin que les banques continuent à prêter, mais aussi une évolution temporaire des réglementations afin d'encourager l'expansion du crédit. Les banques publiques bien capitalisées et bien gérées peuvent aussi jouer un rôle moteur.

Plus généralement, si le détail des mesures peut varier d'un pays à l'autre, des moyens budgétaires extraordinaires seront probablement nécessaires pour dynamiser partout la reprise. Les pouvoirs publics devront stimuler l'emploi et l'activité économique sans augmenter les risques sanitaires.

Le problème, c'est que les marges de manœuvre dont dispose aujourd'hui l'Amérique latine sont encore plus étroites qu'elles ne l'étaient après la crise financière mondiale de 2008. Les coûts publics devront être compensés par des ajustements budgétaires pour les zones les moins prioritaires. L'engagement des gouvernements à corriger dans un délai raisonnable le déficit budgétaire qui en résultera devrait atténuer le risque d'un abaissement de la note de crédit.

L'aide extérieure, tant pour les comptes budgétaires que pour la balance des paiements, est cruciale, notamment pour les pays d'Amérique latine les plus petits et les moins développés. Si les secteurs publics et privés enregistrent des déficits plus importants, les déséquilibres des paiements courants augmenteront probablement aussi. Les fuites récentes de capitaux qui ont affecté les économies émergentes - l'un des renversements les plus importants des flux de capitaux dans l'histoire moderne des marchés financiers - ajoutent au problème.

La dépréciation associée des monnaies sur les marchés émergents peut être une force déstabilisatrice. Pour de nombreuses économies de la région, une aide officielle extérieure beaucoup plus importante sera la seule façon de résister à cette accumulation de chocs.

Le Fonds monétaire international a ici un rôle essentiel à jouer. Le FMI doit répondre aux besoins à court et à long terme des pays, pour ce qui concerne les devises et leurs difficultés budgétaires ; il doit continuer à soutenir leurs économies dans une crise dont la durée demeure très incertaine. Le Fonds a besoin d'augmenter ses moyens et sa capacité à déboursier rapidement. Les gouvernements d'Amérique latine devraient s'unir pour réclamer une nouvelle émission d'avares de réserve mondiaux du Fonds, les droits de tirages spéciaux (DTS), pour un montant total de 1 000 milliards de ces DTS.

Si l'allocation des DTS aux différents pays membres du FMI est fonction de leur quote-part, il serait possible de parvenir à une allocation non proportionnelle en créant un consortium commun qui serait supervisé par le Fonds. En outre, le doublement immédiat des nouveaux accords d'emprunt (NAE) fournirait au FMI la capacité dont il a besoin pour répondre à la demande imminente et urgente de prêts. Enfin, parce que les programmes de prêts traditionnels du FMI ne seront pas approuvés à temps, le Fonds devrait ouvrir significativement l'accès aux mécanismes d'assistance financière rapide dont les conditions sont plus souples, comme l'instrument de financement rapide (IFR), ou créer de nouvelles lignes de crédit face à la pandémie.

Lawmakers extend Emergency to 60 days

Lawmakers extend Emergency to 60 days
By E. J. Nathaniel Daygbor
Members of the Liberian Legislature have overwhelmingly voted here extending President George Manneh Weah's 21 days State of Emergency to 60 days or two months.

They reached the decision following 72 hours of debate on the State of Emergency and a stimulus package subsequently recommended by President Weah to ease economic burdens faced by citizens in the wake of a 14-day lockdown in four counties, including the President's own home, Grand Kru County in the southeast.

Both the House of Representatives and the Liberian Senate passed a Joint Resolution over the weekend, endorsing the stimulus package and extending the State of

produced food. That the Food Distribution Program must prioritize the vulnerable population and the first responder population to wit: the disadvantaged youth, the homeless, orphanages, senior citizens, people with disabilities health workers and security personnel deployed in the frontline of the enforcement of the State of Emergency and that all restrictions imposed by the President pertaining to the movement of persons and hours applicable is hereby approved and modified only to the extent that all persons appearing in public streets and buildings must wear a protective device that covers at least the nose and mouth."

The lawmakers also approved the President's request for free electricity and water supply to homes during the State of Emergency and lockdown but modified that these services should extent to

international private organizations, business enterprises and any other person interested in assisting the most vulnerable populations of the Republic against the scourge of COVID 19.

They agree that all health workers across the country shall receive monthly hazard pay, including regular and volunteer workers as provided for by international organizations.

Frontline security personnel shall receive monthly extended duty pay for the duration of the State of Emergency, and that appropriations of amounts under this program shall be subject to the recast budget.

Meanwhile, they want a Joint Select Emergency Oversight Committee to be appointed by the Speaker of the House of Representatives and the President Pro-Tempore of the Senate to



Emergency to 60 days.

The document, signed by more than two-third majorities of both houses, takes effect as of April 10, 2020.

However, the resolution states that President Weah, on advice of health experts, may impose an absolute quarantine in the affected counties or portions thereof at a time and for a duration based on expert advice.

The Joint Resolution reads in part, "That the initial request for US\$25 million is hereby approved for the Food Support Program with the modification that all of the 15 counties within the Republic shall be covered as affected counties for food support and additional amounts needed shall be submitted for re-appropriation. Procurement under this program must first accommodate locally

all cross-border counties currently being served by the West Africa Power Pool, a regional program.

"The Water support program shall cover the municipal water program in all counties where they are being currently implemented. That the Market Women and Small Informal Petty Traders Bank Loan Program is approved, with modification to add credit unions and related entities registered and doing business before January 1, 2020," the Joint Resolution further reads.

The Legislators grant the request of the President to appropriate US\$15 million for government domestic debt during the 2020/2021 Fiscal Year budget.

They call for creation of a COVID 19 Emergency Relief Fund that would solicit private donations from individuals, group of individuals, local and

exercise oversight over all of the programs approved in the Joint Resolution to report to both chambers after the crisis.

As part of additional restrictive measures in the COVID-19 fight, President Weah recently declared a 21-day State of Emergency that is renewable and lockdown of four counties (Montserrado, Margibi, Nimba and Grand Kru) for 14 days, among other precautionary actions.

The President's declaration is in accordance with Articles 85, 86, 87 and 88, respectively of the Constitution of Liberia, and after due consultation with the Speaker of the House of Representatives and the President Pro-Tempore of the Liberian Senate, as required by law. **-Editing by Jonathan Browne**

Americans rush

Cont'd from page 6

evacuation of U.S. Peace Corps Volunteers from their posts around the world, including Liberia.

On March 22, 2020, the Liberian Ministry of Health declared the COVID-19 a National Health Emergency and announced the closure of Roberts International Airport (with limited exceptions) as of March 23 at 11:59 PM. Since then, flights to and from Liberia have been heavily restricted to humanitarian and emergency cases.

However, the U.S. Embassy in Monrovia says it has no greater priority than the safety and security of U.S. citizens.

"If an Embassy-chartered

flight becomes available, prior to boarding, all confirmed passengers must sign a promissory to reimburse the U.S. government for the cost of the flight at a later date. U.S. citizens and lawful permanent residents who have submitted promissory notes will be considered for future flights. Please note that submitting a promissory note is not a guarantee of a seat. Only passengers who receive an email confirming a seat on a flight or confirming standby status should proceed to the airport if a flight is announced", the embassy's post details. **Story by Jonathan Browne**

Rep. Kolubah quits COP

By Bridgett Milton

Montserrado County Electoral District #10 Representative Yekeh Y. Kolubah has officially resigned from the Council of Patriots (COP), a group which has organized and led mass protests against the regime of President George Manneh Weah to demand reforms.

According to a written communication sent to the chairman of COP and talk show host Henry P. Costa, Rep. Kolubah says he appreciates the leadership and members of COP for the cordial working relationship during his stay as member of the Council of Patriots.

by the COP.

Except for Mr. Kolubah, prosecutors have dropped charges against all of his former bodyguards who allegedly carried on the alleged act under his instruction.

On Saturday, 18 April, Rep. Kolubah said the Chairman of COP told Spoon TV that he was under the roof and the COP are taking care of his legal team.

But Kolubah in his resignation letter says he has no knowledge of COP paying a cent to his lawyer from the genesis of his case in court up to present.

The Chairman of COP has acknowledged receipt of a



Representative Yekeh Y. Kolubah

Kolubah goes further saying he wants to clarify that at no time did the COP ever assist him financially or made payment to his legal team in the ongoing court proceeding involving him and the government of Liberia as was declared by the Chairman of the COP.

Mr. Kolubah is facing multiple charges as a lone defendant at Criminal Court "A," on grounds that his former bodyguards allegedly beat and injured one Emmanuel Freeman for refusing to accept T-shirt and leaflet offered him for the June 7, 2019 protest organized

letter from Rep. Yekeh Kolubah, tendering his resignation from the COP after suspending his membership several months back.

Mr. Costa says the COP has stood by Rep. Kolubah, and their lawyers have been representing him in court with all expenses covered by the COP.

He adds that they intend to continue to help until the case ends.

He however thanks and appreciates Rep. Kolubah for his time in the COP and wishes the lawmaker well. **-Edited by Winston W. Parley**

Liberia records highest COVID-19 death rate

By Othello B. Garblah

The tiny West African nation Liberia has recorded the highest COVID 19 death rate in the West African sub-region and beyond so far on the continent.

The country which was founded by freed American slaves as at Saturday April 18, reported 91 confirmed COVID 19 cases with 7 recoveries and 8 deaths among the confirmed cases so far are about 18 health workers one of which died on Saturday at the 14 Military Hospital.

At 91 cases and 8 deaths, it puts the death rate at 8.8 percent, higher than the rest of the countries in the sub-region most of whom have reported more cases than

Nimba County which brings the total number of confirmed cases to 91, with 76 active cases and over 489 contacts listed to follow up.

Liberia's increasing death rate compares to its west African neighbors has raised the cause for concern amidst predictions by the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA).thatAfrica could see anywhere between 300,000 and 3.3 million deaths from the coronavirus.

So far in the West African sub-region, compared to Liberia, Ghana, which has by far reported more confirmed cases than the rest of the countries in the sub-region-834, has reported 99 recovery and 9 deaths so far. Ghana is followed by Ivory Coast with 801

Togo which shares common border with Ghana has reported 84 confirmed cases, 49 of which have recovered with 5 deaths, while Cape Verde Island has 61 confirmed cases, with 1 recovery and 1 death so far.

Guinea Bissau with its political uncertainty has so far reported 50 confirmed cases with zero recovery and zero death.

Sierra Leone, which is next door to Liberia has so far reported 35 confirmed cases with zero recovery and zero death. Benin, also with 35 cases so far, has recorded 18 recoveries and 1 death. Mauritania, which has so far reported the lowest number of confirmed cases in the sub-region has 7 confirmed cases,



Liberia.

The situation here appears gloomy. President George Weah on April 8, declared a state of emergency locking down the country for 21 days. Under the Liberian Law, the Legislators have up to one week to either approved or reject the President's declaration.

On Friday April 17, members of the Liberian Legislature did not only approved the President's state of emergency which was initially put at 21days but extended it to 60 days, with stimulus package attached.

On Saturday, the country reported 10 new confirmed cases 9 of which were reported in Montserrado County alone with one from

confirmed COVID 19 cases, 239 recovery and 8 deaths. Next to Ivory Coast is Niger, which has reported 639 cases as at Sunday with 113 recoveries and 19 deaths.

Niger is followed by Bourkinafaso. With 564 cases, the country has reported 321 recoveries so far with 36 deaths. Neighboring Guinea has 518 cases, reporting 65 recoveries and 3 deaths, while Senegal has 350 cases, reporting 211 recoveries and 3 deaths.

Nigeria follows Senegal with 306 confirmed cases, 93 recoveries and 13 deaths including President Buhari's chief of staff over the weekend. Nigeria is followed by Mali with 216 cases, 41 recoveries and 13 deaths.

2 recoveries and 1 death.

However, despite these encouraging signs of minimum deaths and recoveries in the sub-region, experts have warned most deaths will be recorded in the Northern Africa sub-region while Southern and Western Africa are expected to experience a comparable death toll.

Death in the Eastern Africa sub-region are expected to be the lowest of the sub-regions in Africa.

According to the BBC, Algeria, Morocco, South Africa, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Tunisia and Cote d'Ivoire are expected to be the countries with the largest loss of life.

Hundreds homeless

Cont'd from page 7

reporter.

She narrates that she no longer engages in the little business she was doing prior to the lockdown imposed by government in the wake of the increasing coronavirus cases here.

"We already lockdown, finding food to survive is challenging, then, talking about fixing roof. My son, no money," she continues.

Madam Geplay who has 10 dependents calls on the government and other humanitarian organizations to come to her aid, saying with frustration that she didn't know where she and her dependents are going sleep as others are observing the preventive measures put in place by the government.

Another victim in the Beinwein Community, Prince Chea tells our reporter that while he and his family were asleep, the heavy storm took away the roof of his house, leaving them homeless until a

Church came to their rescue by providing them two bedrooms in the Church compound.

Mr. Chea who and his family lived in a three - apartment house prior to the incident, notes that the incident has now compelled him and his wife, children, sisters, mother and father to live together in the two bedrooms given to them by the Church.

"It is seriously frustrating for us right now. This has never happened to us all our years in this community. Speaking with you now everywhere [is] closed, no business running, you can't run to anyone for credit and even if you have money, where you will find material to buy," Mr. Chea laments.

At the Hill Top City Community, other victims were seen moving with their belongings from one end to another.—*Edited by Winston W. Parley*

Lockdown not

Starts from back page

takes time into consideration during the lockdown saying "when are we procuring the testing kits, and the PPEs (gloves, masks...), the medical equipment, etc. The timing matters because these things are in demand globally. It takes really, really good time to get."

He frowns on the government's continuous reactive responses saying it is just wrong for government to continue to be reactive rather than being proactive.

"We can't keep reacting to crisis. We must be proactive. Let's take cue from the US where the wave of protest grows," he said warning that

"If we do not fully utilize this so-called lockdown period while our people are still moderate, any extension is likely to be chaotic."

He expressed further fear that if the lockdown isn't showing results, people will not continue to stay home, saying "No amount of STIMULUS PACKAGE will do. Because we are missing a lot under lockdown than rice."

Atty. Teh concluded by saying he is not an expert but he has impeccable common sense credential to speak to these issues that have the propensity to undermine the government's intent if not implemented well.

McGill threatens

Starts from back page

Commenting on report that he been admitted to the Intensive Care Unit (ICU) at the 14 Military Hospital over coronavirus, McGill says his health is stable and he has never been at the ICU.

"Those people that wishing me to have contracted the virus and being admitted at the ICU, [it's] far from the truth," he says, adding that it

is the thinking of few people that maybe hit him.

"In fact, I am here at the place. If I have the virus I will not [be] here with you. You been to my house several times and we have interacted. They are just lying and highest level of hatred shown in these difficult time," Minister McGill concludes.—*Edited by Winston W. Parley*

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McGill threatens officials with prosecution



Minister of State for Presidential Affairs Nathaniel McGill

By **E. J. Nathaniel Daygbor**
The Minister of State for Presidential Affairs Nathaniel McGill warns that prosecution awaits those who will tamper with the stimulus package intended for Liberians and other residents of the country.
In an interview over the weekend at a local hotel, Mr.

McGill assured Liberians that the stimulus package will benefit all.
According to him, it is premature for anyone to think that food and stimulus package intended for everyone will be diverted for few government officials' personal use.
"For people to think that the stimulus package will be used to enrich few individuals in

government at the detriment of the Liberian people is far [from] reality and is very premature [for] opposition or for anyone to have such thinking," McGill says.
He argues that the food distribution will be handled by the World Food Program (WFP), saying WFP has the expertise and the rules and regulations will be crafted by the government's technical team.
According to him, government will not relent in prosecuting those who will be found in corruption.
McGill expresses thanks and appreciation to the Liberian Legislature and the Liberian populace for the level of support accorded so far in the fight against coronavirus.
McGill intimates that President George Manneh Weah is very concerned and worried about the plight of every Liberian in the darkest period of the country and the world at large.

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Lockdown not enough to curb virus spread

-Atty. Kukuyon Teh
Liberian lawyer and rights advocate, Attorney Kukuyon Wleh Teh, says locking down the country is not enough to defeat the deadly coronavirus pandemic here.
President George Weah on April 8, declared a state of emergency locking down the country for 21 days to enable his government take appropriate measures to curb the spread of the virus among

the population.
Members of the Legislators in a joint resolution on Friday April 17, did not only approved the President's state of emergency along with a stimulus package but extended the time frame to 60 days.
But Atty. Teh told the New Dawn over the weekend that the lockdown put in place by the government is not sufficient to curb the virus.
"As the lockdown is underway, we must begin effective screening of the



Atty. Teh

population, identifying sick people, isolating sick people, and treating them." Atty. Teh said stressing that these measures must begin now.
"We must also improve and intensify our information dissemination strategy. Unfortunately, two weeks running the cases are increasing exponentially," he bemoaned.
Atty. Teh opines that it is important that the government

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