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P11

Pres. Weah with Prophet T.B. Joshua prior to the 2017 elections

I want take Weah back

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Trouble looms

-over Gbarpolu election



P11

Senatorial Candidate Madam Botoe Kanneh

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Continental News

In Somalia, COVID-19 Vaccines Are Distant as Virus Spreads

As richer countries race to distribute COVID-19 vaccines, Somalia remains the rare place where much of the population hasn't taken the coronavirus seriously. Some fear that's proven to be deadlier than anyone knows. "Certainly, our people don't use any form of protective measures, neither masks nor social distancing," Abdirizak Yusuf Hirabeh, the government's COVID-19 incident manager, said in an interview. "If you move around the city (of Mogadishu) or countrywide, nobody even talks about it." And yet infections are rising, he said. It is places like Somalia, the Horn of Africa nation torn apart by three decades of conflict, that will be last to see COVID-19 vaccines in any significant quantity. With part of the country still held by the al-Qaida-linked al-Shabab extremist group, the risk of the virus becoming endemic in some hard-to-reach areas is strong – a fear for parts of Africa amid the slow arrival of vaccines. "There is no real or practical investigation into the matter," said Hirabeh, who is also the director of the

Martini hospital in Mogadishu, the largest treating COVID-19 patients, which saw seven new patients the day he spoke. He acknowledged that neither facilities nor equipment are adequate in Somalia to tackle the virus. Fewer than 27,000 tests for the virus have been conducted in Somalia, a country of more than 15 million people, one of the lowest rates in the world. Fewer than 4,800 cases have been confirmed, including

at least 130 deaths. Some worry the virus will sink into the population as yet another poorly diagnosed but deadly fever. For 45-year-old street beggar Hassan Mohamed Yusuf, that fear has turned into near-certainty. "In the beginning we saw this virus as just another form of the flu," he said. Then three of his young children died after having a cough and high fever. As residents of a makeshift

camp for people displaced by conflict or drought, they had no access to coronavirus testing or proper care.

At the same time, Yusuf said, the virus hurt his efforts to find money to treat his family as "we can't get close enough" to people to beg.

Early in the pandemic, Somalia's government did attempt some measures to limit the spread of the virus, closing all schools and shutting down all domestic and

international flights. Mobile phones rang with messages about the virus.

But social distancing has long disappeared in the country's streets, markets or restaurants. On Thursday, some 30,000 people crammed into a stadium in Mogadishu for a regional football match with no face masks or other anti-virus measures in sight.

Mosques in the Muslim nation never faced restrictions, for fear of the reactions. VOA



Somalis without facemasks visit the Bakara Market in Mogadishu, Dec. 2, 2020. Much of the population in Somalia hasn't taken the coronavirus seriously.

Central African rebels 'seize south-eastern city'

Rebel forces have seized a south-eastern city in the Central African Republic, an official from the country's United Nations mission says.

The rebels staged a dawn raid and were now everywhere in Bangassou, the official said, adding that fighting is continuing in

several parts.

A rebel coalition has attacked several towns in recent weeks, and currently controls two thirds of the country. They accuse the government of holding a fraudulent election on 27 December.

The government has denied allegations of poll rigging. Initial

results of the election for president and seats in the national assembly are expected on Monday. The authorities have also accused former President François Bozizé, who supports the rebels, of trying to stage a coup - something he has denied.

The Central African Republic (CAR) is resource-rich but deeply unstable country that has seen several coups since independence from France 60 years ago.

BBC Africa editor Mary Harper says there seems to be no let up in rebel activity.

On Saturday, the rebel coalition attacked the town of Damara, which is about 70km (43 miles) north of the capital Bangui. The CAR is one of Africa's poorest countries, even though it is rich in resources like diamonds and uranium. The UN, which has nearly 13,000 peacekeepers on the ground, estimates that half of the population are dependent on humanitarian assistance. BBC



Bangassou, pictured the month before it was seized, is on the border with DR Congo

Dozens killed in attacks on Niger villages

Suspected Islamist militants have attacked two villages in Niger, with reports of dozens of civilians killed.

Around 49 died and 17 were injured in the village of Tchombangou, while another 30 died in Zaroumdareye - both near Niger's western border with Mali, Reuters reports.

There have been several recent violent incidents in Africa's Sahel region, carried out by militant groups.

France said on Saturday that two of its soldiers were killed in Mali.

Hours earlier, a group with links to al-Qaeda said it was behind the killing of three French troops in a separate attack in Mali on Monday. France has been leading a coalition of West African and European allies against Islamist militants in the Sahel.

But the region continues to be affected by ethnic violence, banditry, and human and drug trafficking.

In light of Saturday's attacks, Interior Minister Alkache Alhada said soldiers had been sent to the area, according to French outlet RFI. But Mr Alhada did not say how many casualties there had been across the two villages. A local official, quoted by AFP news agency, said many people were killed, and a local journalist spoke of up to 50 deaths. Niger's Tillabéri region, where the villages are



situated, lies within the so-called tri-border area between Niger, Mali and Burkina Faso, which has been plagued by jihadi attacks in recent years. Travel by motorbike has been banned in the region for a year, as part of efforts to stop incursions by Islamic militants, who often launch attacks from the vehicles.

Areas of Niger are also facing repeated attacks by jihadists from Nigeria, where the government is fighting an insurgency by Boko Haram.

Last month, members of the group killed at least 27 people in Niger's south-eastern Diffa region.

The latest attacks in Tillabéri come amid national elections in Niger, as President Mahamadou Issoufou steps down after two five-year terms.

Election officials announced provisional results on Saturday, showing a lead for Mohamed Bazoum - a former minister and a member of Niger's ruling party.

A second round of votes is expected to be held on 21 February, once ballots have been validated by the country's constitutional court. BBC

EDITORIAL

Weah's Executive Order#103 and Liberia's economic woes

PRESIDENT GEORGE MANNEH WEAH at the close of 2020 issued Executive Order No.103 in what the Executive Mansion in Monrovia says is aimed at stimulating economic growth in the country without explaining clearly how.

THE PRESIDENT'S EXECUTIVE Order#103 slashes taxes here and there, and effects series of waivers but stops short of detailing how the Liberian economy, that has nose-dived, would experience a turnaround and hit growth that had diminished in the last three years.

FOR INSTANCE, THE President's Order declares that the Commissioner General of the Liberia Revenue Authority, in consultation with the Minister of Finance and Development Planning, may set forth a schedule of Waivers, in Regulation, to be reviewed annually for the granting of relief from assessment of penalties and interest related to Real Estate Taxes, Customs Duties and Related Levies including those under Administrative Review, Judicial Review, Audits or Examinations as a result of either or both failure to file or failure to pay such Taxes, Duties and Levies when due.

"FAILURE ON THE part of a Taxpayer to take advantage of a Waiver offered during an annual period shall preclude the Taxpayer from taking advantage of future annual Waivers for a period of 5 (five) years, during which period the Taxpayer is to be subject to sanctions, including the seizure and forfeiture of assets," noted the President's Executive Order.

BUT HOW CAN citizens and foreign business people remain faithful to paying taxes regularly when the economy is plummeted due to serious cash shortage and poor sales? The President failed to address the key issue of depleting the Government Consolidated Account with the Central Bank of Liberia that has led to borrowing from commercial banks without paying thus, affecting banks' liquidity.

WE ALSO WONDER how reducing taxes on air travel tickets from 10 percent to 7 percent and extending Work Permits to five years amid a heightened global pandemic stimulate growth in an economy that is heavily consumption-based.

"COLLECTION OF WORK and Residence Permits Fees: All fees for Work and Residence Permits shall be paid directly to the Liberia Revenue Authority for deposit into the Consolidated Account of the Government of Liberia."

THE EXECUTIVE MANSION also failed to address the critical issue of confidence crisis in the banking sector that has been characterized by restricting daily withdrawal which has inversely discouraged depositors from banking.

IF THE ECONOMY is to be resuscitated, restoring confidence in the banking sector is very critical to generating liquidity to avoid speculation and capital flight.

ADHERENCE TO TRANSPARENCY and accountability are similarly important to having a predictive economy that can stimulate forecasting and reliability. But when billions of local banknotes are printed and brought into the country, but never put in circulation without any explanation it leaves room for uncertainty and apprehension.

PRESIDENT WEAH AND his Economic Management Team should go back to the drawing board and carve a realistic economic plan that would give Liberians hope both for the short and long-term that they would get out of the current quagmire that is leaving many family heads with serious hypertension and early death.

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COMMENTARY

By Moritz Kraemer

African Countries Need Not Fear Default

Many developing countries carry crushing debt burdens, but are reluctant to pursue much-needed restructuring, for fear of losing access to capital markets. This fear is overblown, and its persistence is raising the risks for debtors and creditors alike.

FRANKFURT - Since the COVID-19 crisis began, the specter of sovereign default has loomed over developing economies. Many sovereigns are so afraid of losing market access that they are unwilling to address debt-sustainability problems. Yet a clear-eyed look at the impact of the COVID-19 crisis, together with the fiscal and financing realities for low-income countries, reveals a "new normal," in which a timely default is far from the worst-case scenario.

According to World Bank estimates, half of the world's poorest countries are now in or at risk of debt distress. In Sub-Saharan Africa, for example, solvency metrics have deteriorated significantly this year, following six years of gradual weakening linked to declining global commodity prices. Angola, Ghana, and Nigeria spend close to half of their government revenues on interest payments. For the 19 Sub-Saharan African sovereigns that it rates, S&P Global Ratings estimates that two-thirds of all interest payments go to private creditors.

Meanwhile, the International Monetary Fund predicts that the COVID-19 crisis will wipe out a decade of progress on poverty reduction, with lasting effects that significantly impede low-income countries' development prospects. This should be unacceptable on humanitarian grounds alone, and even more so in light of longer-term sustainability and development goals.

To be sure, creditors have taken some steps to ease developing economies' debt burdens. Under the G20's Debt Service Suspension Initiative (DSSI), the world's poorest countries, mostly in Africa, can request a postponement of bilateral debt-service payments. G20 countries have also agreed on a common framework for restructuring government debt.

But there are significant barriers to progress. For starters, many developing countries worry that rating agencies will declare a default if they restructure their bonded debt, causing them to lose market access for a prolonged period. But, while rating agencies will indeed classify a restructuring as a default, worries about losing market access are overblown.

For starters, the poorest countries already lost access to capital markets back in March. They should now be focused on regaining market access in a sustainable way.

In fact, as investors' quest for yield has grown increasingly desperate, these countries have gained leverage. During the Latin American debt crisis of the 1980s, ten-year US Treasury yields were above 10%. Even at the height of the 2007-09 global financial crisis, ten-year Treasuries were yielding close to 4%. Today, yields have fallen below 1%. Globally, negative-yield bonds exceed \$18 trillion.

In this context, investors simply cannot afford to sulk over a defaulted sovereign for too long if it means foregoing attractive returns. And, indeed, the decline in global interest rates has been accompanied by an observable reduction in

the time it takes for a sovereign to regain market access after default. Argentina issued a 100-year bond in 2017 - a year after emerging from default. Greece's ten-year bond yields less than 0.7%. That is not a coincidence.

Moreover, for a borrower on the brink of insolvency, debt restructuring boosts creditworthiness. As excess leverage is removed, growth and development potential improve. That should make DSSI-eligible sovereigns in Africa and beyond attractive investment destinations again.

While restructuring African bonds would be a boon for debtors, it would do little harm to creditors, unlike, say, the debt crisis of the 1980s. Back then, an early unilateral default by emerging-market sovereigns could have rendered some of the largest US banks insolvent, which meant creditors had a strong interest in playing hardball and buying time.

Not today. The debt held by DSSI-eligible countries amounts to only a negligible share of institutional investors' portfolios. For the overall investment industry, the impact will be trivial. Given the lack of trauma, investors will be far less reluctant to return to the market when the price is right.

Finally, to borrow the famous words of Kenneth Rogoff and Carmen Reinhart, this time really is different. The financial predicament in which many poor countries find themselves today is the result not of reckless policies and over-borrowing, but of a major sudden shock. Investors are well aware that defaulting under the current conditions in no way signals that another default is likely. The stigma of default simply will not stick.

There is one more potential barrier to progress: private creditors' reluctance. In fact, some private creditors are doing all they can to stoke sovereign debtors' default fears. But the truth is that restructuring talks are all but inevitable, and both private and official creditors must participate. (Unlike in previous African debt crises, bondholders are now an important part of the debt equation in many countries.)

Such talks should be initiated as soon as possible. Past experience with sovereign-debt restructuring has shown that delays lead to deeper crises in debtor countries, larger haircuts for creditors, and more prolonged exclusion from capital markets.

Luckily, African bond maturities will be exceptionally low in 2021. That provides a perfect backdrop for the necessary and complex multi-creditor relief negotiations. On behalf of their suffering societies, African leaders must seize that opportunity, as they hold all the cards.

To make the exercise worthwhile, however, debtor governments need to commit credibly to direct future private flows in ways that promote social and economic development, thereby inoculating themselves against future shocks and setbacks. Debt relief and a sustainable recovery must be two sides of the same coin. For Africa, that coin will purchase the ultimate reward: a more prosperous and resilient future.

O-PED

By Carl Bildt

Arab Hope Springs Eternal

A decade after the start of the Arab Spring, the hope of securing democracy and human rights in the Arab world seems as far away as ever. But the counter-revolution of the intervening years cannot last forever, and the sooner that governments recognize the need for reform, the better off they will be.

STOCKHOLM - The Arab Spring that began on December 17, 2010, is a somewhat uncomfortable subject a decade later. Seldom has such a vast outpouring of hope resulted in so much disappointment - and in such deep confusion about what lies ahead.

In 2002, the UN-sponsored Arab Human Development Report issued its stark initial findings, revealing a region that was falling behind the rest of the world, and where the aspirations of the young and the educated could no longer be met. Reform was obviously needed, but it would not be forthcoming. Eight years later, the conditions were ripe for revolution. When it came, it started in Tunisia, where a street vendor, fed up with the petty abuses of a corrupt system, immolated himself.

The focus soon shifted to the center of the Arab world, Egypt. When that country's aging dictator, Hosni Mubarak, threw in the towel as hundreds of thousands demonstrated in Cairo's Tahrir Square, the prospect of a democratic revolution in the Arab world suddenly came into view. Egypt seemed ready for a genuine democratic transition, with traditions of political pluralism to fall back on and a middle class that longed for a more open society and a more stable, representative political system.

There was genuine hope, which is why the European Union invested heavily in Egypt's democratic transition, launching ambitious programs to help with the details of building a new political system. Early on, it was evident that the Muslim Brotherhood was the best-organized political and social movement in the country. For years, it had been mobilizing small-scale entrepreneurs and providing social services to communities, thus building a latent political base that no other movement could replicate. When Egypt held its first competitive election, Mohamed Morsi of the Muslim Brotherhood emerged victorious as president.

The basic question posed by the Arab Spring was whether Islam and democracy could be combined in a way that was both effective and sustainable. In Egypt's case, the Morsi administration stumbled and misused its powers early on. Though its inexperience was hardly surprising, it was glaringly obvious, opening the door for the Muslim Brotherhood's opponents both inside and outside Egypt.

When the military coup came in July 2013, the Morsi government had lost most of its initial support. But that does not mean that Egypt's transition to democracy had to fail. The process was always bound to be bumpy, and one can imagine counterfactual scenarios in which it would have succeeded.

In any case, the repression that followed was brutal. The clearing of Rabaa Square by security forces left at least 817 people dead. By then, the Arab Spring had already begun to fizzle in other countries, too. The United States and key European countries led a military intervention to get rid of Muammar el-Qaddafi's regime in Libya. But this resulted in even more instability in that country, which meant that no one was willing to intervene against Bashar al-Assad's regime in Syria, despite the extreme brutality with which it was cracking down on opposition and rebel movements.

In the years since the Arab Spring, there has been a counter-revolution - an Arab Winter. And for the past four years, this democratic reversal has been actively supported by US President Donald Trump's administration, which largely abandoned America's tradition of advocating human rights and democracy. Where there have been exceptions, such as China and Iran, US criticism has mainly served other strategic interests. Everywhere else, dictators have been flattered, courted, and bestowed with large arms contracts.

Meanwhile, the EU has been effectively marginalized in the region. Few if any of the structural challenges that led to the Arab Spring revolts have been resolved. Early in the 2010s, the International Monetary Fund estimated that most countries in the Arab world would need to achieve annual growth of 7% just to keep the unemployment rate constant; but growth over the past decade has fallen well short of that target. And the human-rights situation is no better. "Under President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi's government," Human Rights Watch reports, "Egypt has been experiencing its worst human rights crisis in many decades."

When it comes to the long term, the regimes in Saudi Arabia, Iran, and Egypt are hardly sustainable. One way or another, there will have to be fundamental reforms to bolster representative government and establish more open societies and economies. That is the abiding lesson of the Arab Spring in a region with a massive and growing youth population.

For the EU and US President-elect Joe Biden's administration, the emphasis now should be on alleviating regional tensions in the Middle East and North Africa so that governments can focus on sorely needed domestic reforms. Without insisting that everything be changed overnight, America and Europe both need to apply consistent pressure on issues like human rights and representative government.

As was the case a decade ago, the key question is how to combine Islam and democracy in a way that facilitates the project of reform. The Arab Spring failed partly because of its own contradictions, and partly because powerful entrenched interests and outside forces wanted it to fail. But the counter-revolution, too, must end eventually.

Without repeating the excessive hopes of a decade ago, the basic demands that drove the Arab Spring must be taken seriously. Political leaders across the region should recognize that meeting them is the only way to ensure long-term stability.

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OPINION

By Ana Palacio

COVID and the Comeback State

If the pandemic turns out to be only a temporary disruption, it will be remembered as little more than another tragedy - memorable, but essentially a discrete event. If, however, the disruption of 2020 spurs deeper reflection on the relationship between government and the governed, then this horrible year will come to be viewed as a focal point, rather than a data point.

MADRID - Some years are barely mentioned in history books; others get their own chapters. The last year certainly feels like the latter, and there is no doubt the COVID-19 pandemic, like the Spanish flu pandemic of 1918-20, will be long remembered. But what makes a year truly remarkable is not how it unfolds, but rather how it changes the world. An anomalous year, after which the world returns to business as usual, means far less, historically, than an inflection-point year that brings about a great transformation and marks the start of a new human epoch. Which will 2020 be?

There is good reason to think the world has been irrevocably changed in 2020. In particular, the events of the last 12 months may well have triggered a fundamental reshaping and rebalancing of the relationship between state and society, particularly in Western liberal democracies.

Since the Cold War ended, Western democracies' social and economic models have become increasingly imbalanced. Free markets, once viewed as a powerful means of strengthening liberal democracy (by creating a rights-demanding middle class), are now an end in themselves - an ideal to uphold, no matter the cost.

And the costs have been high. As free-market orthodoxy demanded, globalization brought looser capital controls, more open borders, large-scale privatization, and deregulation. Governance evolved into a more limited, technical endeavor, and increasingly influential private actors stepped into public roles.

Corporations thus became some of the most powerful global players, and governments have increasingly struggled to tax and regulate them. In some vital areas - from the spread of misinformation on social media to environmental sustainability - corporations have essentially been left to self-regulate.

There has been an impulse to claw back oversight; yet it comes not from the state but from other actors. The push for "environmental, social, governance" corporate accounting and reporting is one example. Public pressure and increasing investor interest have made companies eager to tout their ESG credentials. At the same time, serious transparency and accuracy issues with ESG standards remain. The state's absence is palpable through all of this.

From the perspective of many ordinary citizens, government has behaved ever more like a private service provider in recent decades, even as inequality has soared. The aftermath of the 2008 global financial crisis - when governments pursued largely half-measures to shore up financial systems and prevent another meltdown - shattered the idea that liberal democracy is an automatic guarantor of stability and prosperity. Meanwhile, China pushed its own competing model with a strong central state intertwined with the market, setting the stage for today's global battle of ideas.

From the financial-crisis earthquake rose a wave of populism and nativism - one that engulfed much of the West. With inequality continuing to rise and little effort having been made to mend the relationship between citizen and state, faith in institutions dwindled, and demands for radical change - often reactionary, state-eroding change - gained resonance.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, however, the state has been mounting a comeback. When economies grounded to a halt, governments channeled huge volumes of public money toward propping up private industry and limiting layoffs. In Europe, country-level interventions were buttressed by the unprecedented €750 billion (\$918 billion) pandemic-recovery fund, Next Generation EU.

Moreover, supply-chain disruptions have raised the expectation that states should do more to ensure strategic essential commodities. As such, calls to re-shore production have not only grown louder; they now carry the implication of a reassertion of sovereign control over strategic goods.

Similarly, for the first time in a generation, governments revived their regulatory impulse, especially with regard to the increasingly distortionary Big Tech giants. The European Commission recently unveiled landmark regulations - the Digital Services Act and the Digital Markets Act - to curtail these firms' power, and it has announced plans for further competition-based actions. And in the United States, the Federal Trade Commission and state governments have filed antitrust lawsuits against Alphabet (Google's parent company) and Facebook for using their market power to fend off rivals. Calls to break up these mega-firms are growing louder.

The pandemic has shown that the market's "invisible hand" cannot be counted on to deliver public goods, let alone defend the public interest. The visible hand of the state should contribute, through functioning effective institutions and good governance.

More fundamentally, health and safety measures are a constant physical reminder of the state's presence, which has been so absent in recent years. Some have embraced this invasiveness, recognizing a common responsibility, while others have bristled; but all are aware of the government's role. Sensibilities are changing, and this could be a foundation for broader shifts in the liberal-democratic model.

Of course, 2020 may turn out to be a temporary disruption. Widespread vaccination could end the pandemic, and people, corporations, and governments may return to the pre-pandemic status quo. Resentments will continue to fester and governments will keep muddling through.

In that case, the pandemic will be remembered as another tragedy - memorable, terrible, but essentially a discrete event. If, however, the disruption of 2020 spurs deeper reflection on the relationship between government and the governed, and brings about a genuine strengthening of liberal-democratic institutions, then this horrible year will come to be viewed as a focal point, rather than a data point.

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MORE HEADLINE NEWS

MORE HEADLINE NEWS

Stakeholders end boundary harmonization meeting in Grand Gedeh

The Grand Gedeh Bar Association in collaboration with the Grand Gedeh County Legislative Caucus has ended a two-day Community leaders meeting with stakeholders of bordering communities near Ivory Coast.

District Commissioners, chiefs, among others attended the forum.

The gathering followed numerous complaints of land dispute in the county, most especially, at the bordering communities, involving locals with forest land demarcation amid continuous reports that

bordering towns with claims and counter-claims over the lease agreement.

Based on these factors, several local communities are in fear of not willing to accept those Burkinabes, while others are apprehensive of losing their lands to the illegal immigrants.

Grand Gedehans have called on their lawmakers to intervene to have the illegal immigrants leave the county.

During the special meeting, the Grand Gedeh Bar Association headed by Attorney Alphonsus Zeon, reviewed the ECOWAS Protocol, and raised awareness on customary land right and the new land law.

According to Attorney Zeon, the ECOWAS Protocol provides that citizens of members' States have free movement within the region. He further explained that they need to only obtain legal documents, and enter through recognize border entries.

At the end of the meeting, citizens of bordering towns represented at the meeting signed a joint resolution which will allow those immigrants to stay in Liberia, if only they can obtain work and resident permits, and valid health certificates.

Editing by Jonathan Browne



Grand Gedeh Legislative Caucus Chair, Alex Grant

youth leaders, the Chairman of the Grand Gedeh Legislative Caucus Alex C. Grant, and Senator Marshall A. Dennis, women leaders, traditional leaders and local

Burkinabe nationals have been crossing into Liberia illegally.

The Burkinabes have allegedly established lease agreement with local communities at several

Maritime Authority denies sanctions report

The Liberia Maritime Authority (LiMA) clarifies reports that the United States recently imposed sanctions on several Liberian-registered shipping companies. The LiMA rejects such information as misleading and inaccurate.

In a press release dated Saturday, January 2, 2021, it details that vast majority of entities referred to in a recent publication were non-shipping corporations sanctioned back in 2013 and were immediately stricken from the Liberia Maritime and Corporate

addressing any and all potential violations of the United Nations and United States sanctions regimes and international standards.

It says the compliance program remains a reference point by the government of the United States and world security agencies across the globe, saying, "It is for this reason various national registries throughout Africa, South America and the Pacific have solicited the Registry to consult on implementing similar sanction compliance



Lenn Eugene Nagbe, Commissioner/CEO

Registry in keeping with standard practice. It added that three non-shipping corporations were sanctioned in 2019, and similarly, they were immediately annulled.

"The Liberian Registry is therefore currently absolutely under no sanctions from the United States", the release reads.

It further details that the Registry has a world-class compliance apparatus devoted to preventing and

program."

Meanwhile, the release says the Liberian Registry remains committed to global efforts aimed at combating terrorism financing, narcotics trafficking and compliance with international sanctions policies, while safeguarding interests of its clients. "We also remain true to our record of excellence, safety and efficiency that has been The Registry's hallmarks for many decades."

Local charity fetes over 500 kids for Christmas

Over 500 children from Thinker's Village and surrounding communities received free toys and food on Christmas Day provided by a local humanitarian organization, 'Hands of Hope Liberia.'

Executive Director Madam Lydia Sebwe, said the annual program targeted underprivileged kids.

During the occasion, children between ages one and fourteen years received dolls, cars, balls, and other assorted items. A total of 240 girls received gifts, while 315 boys received variety of toys.

Twelve-year-old Joshua expressed great excitement for his toy and lauded the organization for coming to identifying with them.

"I am so glad that I am among the many kids that benefited from this initiative. I'm humbled and want to thank this organization for putting smiles on our faces," Joshua stated.

Madam Patience Wilson, a parent of Hope Village, said



she was grateful that her children were among the many beneficiaries, and thanked Executive Director Sebwe for the kind gesture.

Pastor Patrick T. Gibson of Light of the World Ministries said the toy distribution attracted children from nearby communities along the RIA

Highway, and hoping that the organizers will sustain the program by increasing the number of children to more than a thousand.

The Annual Toy Distribution and Feeding Program aim to share the joy of Christmas and God's blessing.

Executive Director Sebwe disclosed that in 2021, Hands of Hope Liberia will expand its educational opportunities through scholarship or tuition payment, targeting disadvantaged children with financial challenges.

The organization extended thanks and gratitude to David McGuire and family, Lydia Williams Wuo, Johantz Caine, Jr., Duke Weeks, Samuel McIntosh, Rita Williams, Erin, and Sarah for their financial and in-kind support.

Hands of Hope-LIB, Inc., is a nonprofit organization founded in 2015 dedicated to

providing educational opportunities through academic and athletic scholarship programs to Liberian youth who are financially challenged. It also undertakes an annual toy distribution and feeding program. The non-for-profit organization has network of volunteers, and is legally registered under the laws of Liberia.

Hands of Hope-LIB, Inc., also has a chapter in the United States of America (USA) that is registered with the State of Minnesota. *-Editing by Jonathan Browne*

MORE HEADLINE NEWS MORE HEADLINE NEWS

Liberia gets international thumbs up for COVID response

The United States based Wall Street Journal has described Liberia among several countries as the best at learning from recent epidemics when it comes to

notes that Liberia reported 1 Covid-19 death per 55,040 people, something which is a high mark for the country's health team.

"Liberia, hard hit by the

other countries in Africa, including Senegal and Uganda, also used their experiences from past disease outbreaks to implement swift, expert, comprehensive responses," the report said.

It comes on the heels of recent statements made by Minister of Health, Dr. Wilhelmina Jallah, that the news of development of several vaccines to combat the coronavirus is a critical step to winning the unprecedented fight against the COVID-19 pandemic.

"At present, Liberia has recorded 1637 cases. Of that number, 1354 individuals have recovered with 83 deaths, of which only 13 occurred in our treatment facilities." Dr. Jallah said during a United Nations virtual conference.

Dr. Jallah credited Liberia's success in containing the spread of the virus to lessons learned during the Ebola pandemic six (6) years ago, and working in solidarity with the United Nations and international partners.

She was, however, quick to point out that despite the success, it was important to avoid complacency; stressing that the fight against COVID-19 will only be over when the virus is completely extinct.



how the country has so far handle the coronavirus pandemic.

In its recent report on the way countries have around the globe have handled the COVID-19 pandemic, the paper

Ebola epidemic in 2014, was one of the first countries to start screening for Covid-19 at airports and to adopt other control measures, such as rapid testing, complete contact tracing and quarantine. Many

Bomi: Senator-elect Snowe picks Alice Gborie Lansanah to replace him

By: Ibrahim M. Sesay

Senjeh District, Bomi County. Independent candidate for the Special Senatorial Elections from Bomicounty, Representative Edwin Melvin Snowe Jr. has overwhelmingly won a seat in the Senate following the December 8, 2020 elections. This means that his seat in the House of Representatives will become vacated, prompting rich speculations as to who will replace him.

Days after the official pronouncement by the National Elections Commissioner (NEC), callers into a local radio talk show demonstrated keen interest in only male politicians as possible replacement for Honorable Snowe.

But on December 23, at the Charles Henry Dewey Football Field, senator-elect Edwin Melvin Snowe Jr. raised the arm of Finda Alice GborieLansanah, announcing that she is his choice to replace him as Representative. In order to

become a Representative in the House, the National Elections Commission (NEC) must organize by-elections in Bomicounty, and Finda Alice GborieLansanah must meet the conditions to run as a candidate. Voters will decide if she becomes the second-ever Representative from Bomi.

"I want to say the man who

died trusting me, the chairman of the Unity Party, the man who was flogged along with his wife in 2014, the man who served this county for nine years as senator, the man whose wife was about to contest in 2017, and when I came in the race,

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Hon. Edwin Melvin Snowe Jr. raising the arm of Finda Alice GborieLansanah, the winner of the House of Representatives seat in Bomicounty. Photo Credit: FodayDarzangboSesay

Anxiety over COVID-19 Stimulus Food Package

Patrick N. Mensah, Maryland County

Despite households enumeration by the Liberia Statistics and Geo-Information Services (LISGIS) several citizens in Maryland County have expressed frustrations over prolonged delay of the government COVID-19 Stimulus Food package reaching the county.

The Stimulus Food Package is intended to ease economic burden posed by the pandemic on vulnerable families across Liberia since the outbreak in March 2020.

Residents of Harper, Pleebo and Karluway districts, like many areas were enumerated by LISGIS for food distribution, but they now lament that answering survey questions in the hope of getting their names in the data base to benefit from food ration has been a "complete waste of time".

businesses, but since the pandemic has created a serious setback on the economy, the hope now is the COVID-19 Stimulus Food Package, noting that it will be a great help.

Sarah Dennis, another resident of Harper City who sells water to cater to her family explains that since government made the pronouncement, her eyes have been on the road, awaiting the food ration, but it is yet to come.

"Since we heard about this food business, they can't bring it now?" She asks, and adds, since the pronouncement "we were so happy although we never knew when and how they would bring it. She says delay in the food distribution has become a worrisome situation for them as Liberians.

"My son, let me inform you that since this Corona Virus



Madam Grace Collins, a widow with six children, who sells palmnuts at the Harper General Market to support her family said, when her home was enumerated, she was hopeful the food distribution would have been done early, but instead, her eyes has been on the road for over three months, waiting for the arrival of the COVID-19 food distribution. But nothing has entered the county.

She notes that the Weah-led administration has played games with them regarding the food, saying each time she thinks about the situation, she wants to cry.

"If they [the government] do not want to give us food, it's Ok, then keeping us hoping for nothing", she laments.

Mother Collins continues that though they have been surviving thru their petty

Pandemic, things have been difficult for me and my family, so I thought the government's Food Package could have been a help to me and my family, but we have not received anything, so it's like nothing will come for Marylanders."

50-year-old Allen Togar, who is an artisanal fisherman, says he has been waiting for the food package after the global pandemic slowed fishing activities in the county.

"We are going to almost five months now and the food cannot come, and this is a problem, and we need to be serious about this," Togar said.

"This has caused me and my family to go in debts, which we can't pay. We expected something good to come when they started because of the late time."

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MORE HEADLINE NEWS

MORE HEADLINE NEWS

Nimba election worries CPP

By E. J. Nathaniel Daygbor

The Collaborating Political Parties or CPP is deeply concerned and troubled by ongoing events growing out of allegedly fraudulent conduct of the Senatorial Election in Nimba County, in which its

shown that frauds occurred in Nimba.

“Our poll-watchers and technical team on elections have uncovered that the Nimba County Senatorial Election was characterized by widespread fraud and irregularities which

Cummings highlighted deliberate inconsistencies in the numbers on the official record of count issued to its observers on the day of the election, compared to those published by the National Elections Commission (NEC) including alleged unauthorized and illegal substitution of sensitive election materials with the objective of perpetrating fraud; the deliberate exposure of votes to the ends of perpetrating fraud.

The statement further claims misfeasance and malfeasance by NEC officials, including chasing of poll workers out of some polling places allegedly by local officials, thus depriving the CPP’s candidate her right to obtaining authentic information of the conduct of the election in those places, adding that evidence shows these acts of fraud and irregularities were orchestrated against Madam Weh, the ultimate choice of the people, in favor of Representative Jeremiah Koug of the ruling Coalition for Democratic Change.

CPP laments that as an alliance acclaimed for adherence to the rule of law, it is currently challenging the

clearly undermined the credibility of the election and circumvented the will and pleasure of the people”, the statement under the signature of the CPP secretariat says.

The CPP, under the chairmanship of Alexander



candidate, Madam Edith Gongloe-Weh, lost to incumbent Representative Jeremiah Koug.

In a recent statement, the opposition CPP calls for a rerun of elections in centers where it says evidence have

▶ CONT'D ON PAGE 10

NEC ends senatorial election, Nat'l Referendum

By E. J. Nathaniel Daygbor

The National Elections Commission (NEC) says tally and announcement of results of the Special Senatorial Elections have been completed in 13 counties, except for Grand Kru and Gbarpolu counties, respectively.

Similarly, tally and announcement of results in District#9, Montserrado County and District#2 in Sinoe County have also been completed.

A special statement on updates of results issued recently since the conduct of the 8 December 2020 Special Senatorial Elections, Constitutional Referendum and two Representative By-Elections by the National Elections Commission says tally and announcement of results of the Referendum have also been completed in 12 counties, except for Gbarpolu, Grand Kru and Nimba counties.

NEC technicians sent to Gbarpolu and Grand Kru

counties after the disruption of the electoral process have begun assessing condition of Magisterial Offices and relevant voter precincts as part of ensuring a conducive environment to successfully completing the Special Senatorial Elections and National Referendum in those areas.

Meanwhile, NEC says it continues to engage authorities

to ensure security for the deployment and protection of electoral materials, staff and its offices in Gbarpolu and Grand Kru counties.

The Commission informs the public that the tallying of referendum results in Nimba County is ongoing with additional staff dispatched to the county to speed up the process, after which these results would be announced to the public. *-Editing by Jonathan Browne*



Anxiety over COVID-19

Cont'd from page 6

Frank Jayfin, a resident of Barrobo, Maryland County Electoral district#3 says, they have long waited on the arrival of the food, but up to present, it has yet to enter the county.

He describes the situation as being unbearable and hopes the government should see reason to provide the food rations because they have been patiently waiting for the package since its information was pronounced.

“We are hopeful of getting the package to help our family, because this Government needs to work, and I hope this one overstayed package can be brought to the citizens of the county”, he pleads.

Meanwhile, this paper has gathered that the government and the WFP are collaborating with Caritas Cape Palmas to carry out food distribution in Maryland County.

Although the Catholic-run NGO rejected an interview request, but close sources hinted food distribution will begin in this January 2021.

Recent report from COVID-19 Household Stimulus Food Package Steering Committee, said the delay in the implementation process was attributed to beneficiaries’ registration process which includes identification and verification of the most vulnerable households.

The Steering Committee also pointed to poor road conditions (due to the prolonged seasonal rains), slow food distribution pace due to partner capacity, distributions interrupted by angered Community members, and unauthorized food distribution by community members and leaders.

The New Dawn gathers that a vessel expected to have

arrived in Harper City on 22nd of December 2020 with over 1,080 metric tons of food was delayed and subsequently expected to arrive on December 29, 2020, but up to present, it hasn’t reached the costal county.

However, Caritas Cape Palmas Partners, as part of preparations for the food distribution, has started to engage local leaders, sensitizing them on the COHSFP, its objectives and planned activities.

The Partners have also commenced identifying civil society organizations and community-based organizations for support in accelerating the food distribution.

They are also in close cooperation with community leaders and partners who have started clustering of communities to ease logistical bottlenecks during the food dispatch and distribution.

In July 2020 the Government of Liberia announced the COVID-19 Household Food Support Program (COHFSP) for communities through a partnership with the World Food Program to distribute food to only vulnerable Liberians.

Latest report from the COHFSP states that data entrance and processing have been completed in five southeastern counties namely; Grand Gedeh, Grand Kru, Maryland, River Gee and Sinoe in preparation for the distribution.

The data entrance exercise was recently carried out in Maryland County by 40 data clerks who were locally recruited through the World Food Programme Harper Field Officer. *-Editing by Jonathan Browne*

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Français

Le rapport du FMI sur le Libéria

« Une politique monétaire stricte, une gestion des finances publiques nettement améliorée, une mobilisation des recettes intérieures et un financement sans la banque centrale ont soutenu les efforts de l'administration pour parvenir à la stabilité des prix et des taux de change », a déclaré le Fonds monétaire international dans son examen de la facilité élargie de crédit du pays. (ECF). Le FMI a octroyé au

gouvernement libérien un montant instantané de 38 millions de dollars EU pour répondre aux conditions énoncées dans le programme.

Les première et deuxième révisions font partie des conditions fixées dans le cadre de la facilité de crédit étendue, la demande de dérogation pour non-respect des critères de performance et la modification des critères de performance

Le gouvernement libérien a demandé une dérogation pour non-respect de fin décembre

2019 et fin juin 2020.

Le FMI a déclaré que la décision politique prise par le gouvernement a contribué à préserver le pouvoir d'achat des pauvres qui étaient les plus touchés par la forte inflation au début du programme.

Selon le FMI, le gouvernement libérien a envisagé de placer le programme appuyé par la FEC à la tête de ses priorités et s'est engagé à respecter son plan de développement, le Programme en faveur des pauvres pour la prospérité et

▶ CONT'D ON PAGE 9



Les résultats des élections sénatoriales sont une mise en garde pour le pouvoir, (Cummings)

« Les élections sénatoriales spéciales du 08 décembre constituent une forte mise en garde pour le président George Manneh Weah et sa coalition au pouvoir pour le changement démocratique sur ce qui les attend pour les élections présidentielle et législatives de 2023 », a dit le chef de file de l'opposition et président de la coalition des

principaux partis politiques de l'opposition.

M. Alexander Cummings a déclaré sur un plateau de télévision lundi lors d'une interview que la direction et toute la structure de la plateforme de l'opposition sont satisfaites des résultats des élections sénatoriales. L'opposition a remporté six des 15 comtés, tandis que le parti au pouvoir en a remporté quatre et

les candidats indépendants cinq comtés.

M. Cummings, qui est également porte-étendard du Congrès national alternatif (ANC),

a affirmé que les résultats des élections qui viennent de se terminer sont un message fort du peuple libérien à l'endroit de l'administration actuelle.

Pour Cummings, l'administration Weah gère mal le pays. Selon lui, la victoire de l'opposition dans les comtés peuplés est le début de la bonne marche de l'opposition pour 2023.

Il a dit espérer que les nouvelles figures qui font leur entrée au Sénat n'accepteront pas les pots de vin qu'offre le pouvoir exécutif pour adopter aveuglément des législations. Il a fait savoir que la coalition de l'opposition est en train de rédiger « son programme législatif » pour ses législateurs à la Chambre des représentants et au Sénat libérien.



Que pensent les Africains de la Chine ?

ÉTUDE. Vingt ans après le premier forum Chine-Afrique, une enquête de l'Institut Afrobaromètre donne une idée de l'image de l'empire du Milieu sur le continent.

L'année 2020 marque le vingtième anniversaire du Forum sur la coopération Chine-Afrique (Focac), dont le premier sommet a été organisé à Pékin en 2000. Alors que le prochain sommet, prévu en septembre 2021 à Dakar, est en préparation, les responsables chinois et africains se penchent sur le bilan de ces deux décennies de coopération et sur ses prochaines orientations.

L'engagement croissant et multidimensionnel de la Chine avec l'Afrique a eu des effets importants, bien qu'inégaux, sur la croissance économique, la diversification économique, la création d'emplois et la connectivité en Afrique.

Mais, dans le même temps, il apparaît que les relations sino-africaines sont principalement organisées par le biais des gouvernements chinois et africains, et ne tiennent pas suffisamment compte des opinions et du bien-être des populations africaines.

En 2016, l'institut de recherche panafricain Afrobaromètre (Afrobarometer) a publié sa première étude d'opinion sur ce que les Africains pensent de l'engagement de leurs gouvernements avec la Chine.

L'étude a révélé que 63 % des citoyens interrogés dans 36 pays avaient une image largement positive de la Chine. Cette popularité s'explique avant tout par les projets d'infrastructure, de développement et d'investissement mis en œuvre par la Chine en Afrique. Cependant, les perceptions d'une qualité discutable des produits chinois et de la faiblesse du nombre d'emplois créés dans ce cadre en Afrique pour les Africains avaient contribué à atténuer cette perception.

En 2019-2020, Afrobaromètre a mené une autre série d'enquêtes d'opinion africaine. Les données de 18 pays ont été recueillies directement sur le terrain à partir d'un échantillon de personnes sélectionnées au hasard dans la langue choisie par le répondant avant la pandémie de la Covid-19. Les questions de l'enquête portaient, entre autres, sur la manière dont les Africains perçoivent les prêts chinois, les remboursements de la dette et la dépendance de l'Afrique vis-à-vis de la Chine pour son développement.

Les résultats préliminaires

de cette enquête révèlent que (1) la majorité des Africains préfère toujours davantage le modèle de développement américain (États-Unis) au modèle chinois et que (2) l'influence de la Chine est encore largement considérée comme positive pour l'Afrique même si (3) les Africains, au courant des prêts chinois, estiment que leurs gouvernements empruntent trop.

Dans un contexte où les dirigeants africains et chinois réfléchissent aux modalités de leur coopération, ces résultats sont importants et devraient leur permettre de construire une relation tournée vers l'avenir qui refléterait mieux les opinions et les besoins des citoyens africains.

États-Unis vs Chine

Les enquêtes ont montré que les Africains préfèrent toujours le modèle de développement américain au modèle chinois. Le modèle de développement chinois repose sur une planification politique et un capitalisme de marché dirigé par l'État tandis que le modèle américain met davantage l'accent sur l'importance du marché libre.

Sur les 18 pays, 32 % des enquêtés préféraient le modèle de développement américain, tandis que 23 % préféraient le modèle chinois. Dans l'ensemble, il y a peu de changements depuis 2014-2015, mais quelques revirements s'opèrent au niveau de certains pays.

Au Lesotho et en Namibie, les États-Unis ont dépassé la Chine en tant que modèle de développement privilégié. Au Burkina Faso et au Botswana, la Chine est désormais préférée aux États-Unis. Les Angolais et les Éthiopiens, qui n'avaient pas été inclus dans l'enquête de 2014-2015 (publiée en 2016), sont majoritairement partisans du modèle américain. Cependant, 57 % des Éthiopiens et 43 % des Angolais estiment que l'influence de la Chine a un impact positif sur leur pays.

Le modèle de développement chinois, dynamique et multiforme, est souvent plébiscité par les gouvernants africains. Ce modèle a cependant évolué en fonction du contexte et de la période. Les gouvernements africains doivent décider quels aspects du modèle chinois sont les plus adaptés pour leur pays, et tenir compte des limites de ce modèle.

Un examen plus approfondi des réponses des enquêtes 2014-2015 et 2019-2020 montre que dans les pays où la Chine

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Français

Le rapport du FMI

le développement (PAPD). À cet égard, le FMI a déclaré que le rétablissement de la stabilité macroéconomique, la mise en place d'une base pour une croissance inclusive durable et la correction des faiblesses de la gouvernance restent les principaux objectifs de ce programme.

Statut du programme.

Le Conseil d'administration du FMI a approuvé un accord de quatre ans au titre de la FEC en décembre 2019.

Le Conseil a également approuvé, dans le contexte de la pandémie COVID-19, un allègement de la dette au titre du Fonds de confinement et de secours en cas de catastrophe en avril 2020 et un décaissement au titre de la facilité de crédit rapide (FCR) en juin 2020.

Performance du programme.

Selon le FMI, trois des six critères de performance (CP) fin 2019 n'étaient pas remplis.

En particulier, les critères de performance sur les réserves internationales nettes (NIR) ont été largement ratés en raison du taux de change, selon le FMI.

Le rapport indique en été

outre que trois des six critères de performance de fin juin 2020 n'ont pas non plus été atteints à cause de l'impact de la pandémie qui a rendu les choses difficiles.

Cependant, il a révélé que deux repères structurels (SB) ont été respectés, quatre n'ont pas été atteints, ce, à cause de la pandémie qui a encore mis à rude épreuve la capacité de mise en œuvre.

Même ainsi, le rapport a fait valoir que l'un des quatre repères a été mis en œuvre avec un retard, tandis que des progrès notables ont été réalisés sur plusieurs autres repères.

Entre-temps, le FMI a indiqué que pour renforcer encore la performance du programme, les autorités libériennes ont mis en œuvre des mesures clés comme actions préalables pour l'exercice 2021, dont notamment l'adoption d'un budget conforme aux paramètres du programme et l'apurement de tous les arriérés du service de la dette, entre autres mesures.

Risques pour le programme

Selon le rapport du FMI, les risques sont élevés malgré des mesures de contrôle importantes intégrées dans les actions antérieures et les critères de performance.

COMMENTAIRE

By Moritz Kraemer

L'Afrique et la dette souveraine

FRANCFORT - Depuis le début de la crise déclenchée par le COVID-19, le spectre d'un défaut des dettes souveraines plane sur les pays en développement. De nombreux Etats ont tellement peur de perdre leur accès aux marchés qu'ils ne sont pas disposés à s'attaquer à la question de la viabilité de leur dette. Pourtant, un regard lucide sur l'impact de la crise et sur les réalités budgétaires et financières des pays à faible revenu révèle une "nouvelle normalité" dans laquelle un défaut de paiement en temps voulu est loin d'être le pire des scénarios.

Selon les estimations de la Banque mondiale, la moitié des pays pauvres sont surendettés ou sur le point de l'être. En Afrique subsaharienne par exemple, les indicateurs de solvabilité se sont considérablement détériorés cette année, après six années d'affaiblissement progressif lié à la baisse mondiale du prix des matières premières. L'Angola, le Ghana et le Nigeria consacrent près de la moitié de leurs recettes publiques au paiement des intérêts. Selon l'agence de notation S&P Global Ratings, deux tiers des intérêts versés par les 19 États d'Afrique subsaharienne qu'elle évalue sont destinés à des créanciers privés.

De son côté, le FMI prévoit que la crise va anéantir une décennie de progrès dans la lutte contre la pauvreté, avec des effets durables qui entraveront considérablement les perspectives de développement des pays à faible revenu. Cette situation inacceptable sur le plan humanitaire l'est davantage encore si l'on prend en compte les objectifs de durabilité et de développement à long terme.

Certes, des créanciers ont agi pour alléger le fardeau de la dette des pays en développement. Dans le cadre de l'initiative de suspension du service de la dette (ISSD) du G20, les pays pauvres, notamment en Afrique, peuvent demander un report du service de leurs dettes bilatérales. Les pays du G20 ont également convenu d'un cadre commun de restructuration des dettes publiques.

Mais d'importants obstacles s'opposent au progrès. Ainsi de nombreux pays en développement craignent que les agences de notation ne les déclarent un défaut de paiement s'ils restructurent leur dette obligataire, ce qui, pensent-ils, leur ferait perdre l'accès au marché pendant une période prolongée.

Néanmoins, si les agences de notation peuvent assimiler une restructuration à un défaut de paiement, la crainte de perdre l'accès aux marchés est exagérée : les pays pauvres ont déjà perdu leur accès aux marchés des capitaux en mars dernier. Ils devraient maintenant s'attacher à retrouver un accès durable à ces marchés.

La quête de rendement des investisseurs étant de plus en plus désespérée, ces pays gagnent en pouvoir. Pendant la crise de la dette latino-américaine des années 1980, les rendements à dix ans du Trésor américain étaient supérieurs à 10 %. Même au plus fort de la crise financière mondiale de 2007-2009, ils avoisinaient 4 %. Par contre ils sont aujourd'hui inférieurs à 1 %. Au niveau mondial, les obligations à rendement négatif dépassent 18 000 milliards de dollars.

Les investisseurs ne peuvent donc pas se permettre de se détourner trop longtemps des pays en défaut de paiement si cela implique de renoncer à des rendements attrayants. Ainsi, la baisse généralisée des taux d'intérêt s'est accompagnée d'une réduction visible du temps nécessaire à un Etat pour retrouver l'accès au marché après un défaut de

paiement. L'Argentine a émis une obligation à 100 ans en 2017, un an après être sortie d'un défaut de paiement. L'obligation à dix ans de la Grèce a un rendement inférieur à 0,7 % ; ce n'est pas une coïncidence.

En outre, pour un pays emprunteur au bord de l'insolvabilité, restructurer sa dette renforce sa solvabilité. À mesure que l'excès d'endettement diminue, son potentiel de croissance et de développement s'améliore. De ce fait, les pays susceptibles de bénéficier de l'Initiative de suspension du service de la dette (ISSD) devraient redevenir attractifs pour les investisseurs.

La restructuration des obligations africaines serait une aubaine pour les débiteurs, sans nuire pas aux créanciers, contrairement à ce qui s'est passé lors de la crise de la dette des années 1980. À cette époque, la défaillance unilatérale précoce d'un pays émergent aurait pu rendre insolubles certaines des plus grandes banques américaines. Autrement dit, les créanciers avaient tout intérêt à jouer la carte de la rigueur et à gagner du temps.

Ce n'est plus le cas aujourd'hui. La dette détenue par les pays éligibles à l'ISSD ne représente qu'une part négligeable des portefeuilles des investisseurs institutionnels. Globalement, l'impact de la dette sera faible pour les investisseurs. Ils seront donc beaucoup moins réticents à revenir sur le marché au moment opportun.

Enfin, pour reprendre la fameuse expression de Kenneth Rogoff et de Carmen Reinhart, « cette fois-ci, c'est vraiment différent ». Aujourd'hui les difficultés financières de nombreux pays pauvres ne tiennent pas à une politique imprudente ou au surendettement, elles résultent d'une crise inattendue et brutale. Les investisseurs sont parfaitement conscients qu'un défaut de paiement dans le contexte actuel n'est pas annonciateur d'un autre défaut. Les stigmates de la défaillance se dissiperont assez rapidement.

Il existe un autre obstacle potentiel au progrès : la réticence des créanciers privés. Certains d'entre eux s'efforcent d'alimenter la peur d'un défaut de paiement souverain. Pourtant des négociations de restructuration qui impliquent les créanciers privés et institutionnels sont quasiment inévitables. Les détenteurs d'obligations constituent maintenant une partie importante de l'équation de la dette dans de nombreux pays (contrairement aux précédentes crises des dettes africaines).

Il vaudrait mieux que ces négociations débutent le plus tôt possible. L'expérience montre qu'un retard aggrave la crise des pays débiteurs, se traduit par des décotes plus importantes pour les créanciers et un allongement de la durée d'exclusion des marchés financiers.

Heureusement, les échéances des obligations africaines seront exceptionnellement proches en 2021. C'est une toile de fond idéale pour les négociations nécessaires et complexes concernant les restructurations, avec la participation des divers créanciers. Pour aider leur population, les dirigeants africains doivent saisir l'occasion, car ils ont toutes les cartes en main.

Toutefois pour que le jeu en vaille la chandelle, les Etats débiteurs doivent s'engager de manière crédible à orienter les flux d'investissement privé au profit du développement social et économique, se protégeant ainsi contre d'éventuels échecs ou crises. L'allègement de la dette et une reprise durable doivent aller de paire. C'est ainsi que l'Afrique accédera à la récompense ultime : un avenir plus prospère et plus résilient !

Les résultats des élections

construit des infrastructures, les perceptions sont restées stables ou sont devenues plus positives. C'est notamment le cas au Ghana, au Nigeria, en Ouganda, en Guinée et en Côte d'Ivoire.

La popularité de la Chine augmente au Sahel

Les perceptions de la Chine ont changé en mieux dans certains pays de la région du Sahel, en proie à de multiples défis politiques, sociaux et sécuritaires. Sur le plan stratégique, la Chine s'est beaucoup impliquée dans les activités de sécurité et de développement, les projets d'infrastructure liés aux nouvelles routes de la soie, et les opérations de maintien de la paix et de sécurité, notamment sous l'égide des Nations unies dans la région.

Au Burkina Faso, la popularité du modèle de développement chinois a presque doublé, passant de 20 % à 39 % au cours des cinq années écoulées depuis l'enquête précédente.

En Guinée, où les entreprises chinoises sont principalement impliquées dans des projets miniers, 80 % des citoyens perçoivent l'influence économique et

positive - quatre points de pourcentage de plus qu'il y a cinq ans. Dans l'ensemble, l'implication croissante de la Chine dans la région du Sahel semble avoir eu un fort impact sur les opinions des citoyens.

Impact économique et remboursement de la dette

Une majorité de citoyens africains considèrent que les activités économiques de la Chine ont « assez » ou « beaucoup » d'influence sur les économies de leur pays. Mais cette proportion est passée de 71 % en 2014-2015 à 56 % en 2019-2020 dans les 16 pays étudiés. Alors que six Africains sur dix considèrent l'influence de la Chine sur leur pays comme positive, cette perception est passée de 65 % à 60 % dans 16 pays.

Par ailleurs, les puissances régionales africaines, les organisations régionales et des Nations unies, ainsi que la Russie, sont également perçues comme des entités ayant une influence positive. L'influence de la Russie est perçue comme étant positive par 38 %. Cela pourrait être le reflet de l'engagement politique, économique et sécuritaire croissant de la Russie avec l'Afrique.

ainsi que le rôle des médias russes, tels que RussiaToday et Sputnik.

MORE HEADLINE NEWS MORE HEADLINE NEWS

President Weah issues Executive Order 103 to stimulate economic growth

President George Weah has issued Executive Order No. 103 aimed at stimulating economic growth in the Liberian economy.

According to the Executive Mansion, Executive Order #103 is expected to solidify the gains realized under Executive Order No. 96 and to continue to stimulate economic growth in the Liberian economy.

The Executive Mansion indicates that the economy here has experienced a protracted downturn in activities and slow growth driven by the continuous and

industrial, commercial and retail sectors.

In realization of the situation, the President's Order declares that the Commissioner General of the Liberia Revenue Authority, in consultation with the Minister of Finance and Development Planning, may set forth a schedule of Waivers, in Regulation, to be reviewed annually by them for the granting of relief from assessment of penalties and interest related to Real Estate Taxes, Customs Duties and Related Levies including those under Administrative Review, Judicial Review, Audits or

Order No. 103 directs that all Commercial Importers of goods into Liberia are exempted from seeking Import Permits and filing Import Permit Declarations, which have been administered by the Ministry of Commerce and Industry.

The Commercial Importers of goods must however continue to notify the Ministry of Commerce and Industry, in writing by the completion and submission of the Import Notification Form (INF), of their intent to import, which written notification shall not be used by any Agency of Government, including the Ministry of Commerce and Industry, to circumvent this prohibition against seeking Import Permits and filing Import Permit Declarations.

On the Protection of Domestic Manufacturers and Producers, President Weah, via the Executive Order, directs that as a further mitigating measure, the Minister of Finance and Development Planning shall, by Administrative Regulation, impose a Surtax on goods imported into the Country that are in competition with Local Manufacturers and Producers.

Further, the Executive Order states: "Taxable Services for Sale of Air Tickets by International Transport Services: Travel Services: A supply of Travel Services occurs at the location where the travel originates, or the Passengers embark. The Services of a Travel Agency or Travel Arranger, including the issuing of Tickets for travel that either originates within Liberia or to Passengers embarking within Liberia are Taxable; and the Rate is reduced from 10% to 7%."

For Tax purposes, Executive Order 103 states that Travel Services mean the base fare in money or kind,

▶ CONT'D ON PAGE 11



persistent declines in the prices of and demand for Liberia's primary exports of rubber, iron ore and timber.

The Presidential Order also takes cue from the adoption of the ECOWAS CET effectively which limits Liberia's ability to use import duty as a tax policy instrument to protect local industries from unfair competition and dumping—something that has contributed to the low level of business activities currently experienced in the economic outputs of the

Examinations as a result of either or both failure to file or failure to pay such Taxes, Duties and Levies when due.

"Failure on the part of a Taxpayer to take advantage of a Waiver offered during an annual period shall preclude the Taxpayer from taking advantage of future annual Waivers for a period of 5 (five) years, during which period the Taxpayer is to be subject to sanctions, including the seizure and forfeiture of assets," notes the President's Executive Order.

Regarding Import Permit Declarations, the Executive

Bomi: Senator-elect

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she backed off and supported me. I have come today to give thanks to whom thanks is due. That man, Senator Lahai Gbabyte Lansanah, who died believing in me, who died trusting me, who let go his ambition and became my campaign manager. I have come today to tell the people of this county to join hands together to support and endorse for my replacement Madam Finda Alice GborieLansanah."

"The women have long stood by us, and it is time for us to give women the chance to represent the people of Senjeh District."

Finda Alice GborieLansanah is a registered nurse (RN) by profession, and widow of the late Senator LahaiGbabyteLansanah. During an interaction with her supporters, Lansanah said that she hopes to set an example to encourage more women to run for elected office.

"Running for the position of Representative is not only about Senjeh District, but to raise the status of women in Bomi, and to create leadership ambition in every one of them," she said

The head of the Tubmanburg Marketing Association, Ma Kumba Barrie, called on the women of Senjeh to support Finda Alice GborieLansanah with all their strength.

"I so happy today, my people, that my son Snowe made Finda the one to take his position. All the woman dem in Senjeh try to support Finda and leh we make her be the one to be there for the woman dem. She will be good for

other people to see," said Ma Kumba.

Kolar Godwin Tisdell, a women rights advocate, said that she was impressed with Senator elect Snowe's decision to promote a woman.

"This is good news for us, women of Bomi County. I strongly believe [Finda] will make a difference at the House of Representatives. This is not the time to criticize your friend woman, because every time one woman is given an opportunity, we should support one another and prove the men wrong."

Kolar described Honorable Snowe's decision as the first of its kind in the history of the county.

Perry Nessian, resident of Bomi who follows politics with keen interest, said that Finda Alice GborieLansanah has to be trusted. "Women representation is good, and with her, there will be unity and smooth collaborative working relationship."

Mariama Taylor, a girls' rights advocate, said that Edwin Melvin Snowe took everyone by surprise. "I never knew that among many educated and qualified men that honorable Snowe has on his team, he will decide to choose sis Finda, it is good for us and I hope this will continue in the 2023 election."

If elected in a future by-election, Finda Alice GborieLansanah will be the second female representative from Bomi County. Representative Haja Fata Siryon of Suehn from the Mecca District 3 was the first ever female representative from Bomi.

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uncertain terms condemns acts of violence meted out against peaceful citizens who alarmed over the alleged strange joint-operations of NEC and LNP personnel in the county and calls for the immediate and unconditional release of the LP Secretary General and all others that were arrested in the aftermath of the aforementioned events, or it would begin unspecified political actions to demand their release.

"We believe that they have done absolutely nothing wrong to warrant such blatant violation of their rights; a conduct reminiscent of the

days of jungle justice, coup d'etat and all forms of civil unrest in our country. The CPP will do everything both politically and legally to ensure that the results representing the votes the people of Nimba cast are announced. We shall not sit idly and allow the regime rob the people of Nimba of a victory they deserve through repression, reckless vote rigging, etcetera. We are determined to fight this matter to its legal and political conclusions with all the energy and resources we can possibly command," the statement concludes. -Editing by Jonathan Browne

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Nimba election

outcome of the Nimba County Senatorial Election, adding that evidence in possession of its technical and legal teams, convincingly shows its candidate, Madam Edith Gongloe-Weh would have won the poll by a convincing and irreversible margin if fraud and irregularities which marked the process were never orchestrated and the bare minimum standards for

credible elections were upheld.

"While our legal challenge of the election result is ongoing, the regime has allegedly embarked on a clearly fruitless effort to clean the trail of its mess by going to magisterial centers in the county to tamper with voting records. About two days ago, at 3 A.M., residents of Sanniquellie alarmed over the surreptitious movement of people identified as officials of

the NEC, accompanied by officers of the Liberia National Police, at a Magisterial Center in the county. This prompted the unprovoked arrest and ill-treatment of the Secretary General of Liberty Party's Nimba County Chapter, Mr. Princeton Lofan, by officers of the Liberian National Police," the CPP laments.

The Collaboration in no

I want take Weah back

Nimba County Senator Prince Yormie Johnson, a key political ally of President George Manneh Weah, has strongly suggested a need to take Mr. Weah back to the Nigerian spiritual leader, Prophet T.B. Joshua for spiritual consultation on whether the President should seek a second term in 2023.

Prophet T.B. Joshua is founder and head of the Church of All Nations based in Lagos, Federal Republic of Nigeria.

Prior to the presidential

County has the second highest number of registered voters next to Montserrado.

Delivering a sermon during worship on Sunday, 27 December at his church in Paynesville, Sen. PYJ, also an evangelist, said taking Weah to the Nigerian spiritual leader for the second time is necessary to establish whether President Weah still enjoys God's grace and blessing to govern Liberia after his first term in 2023.

"To many disappearances in the country; three auditors were killed and their bodies rushed to the mortuary in what

refused to go and duck in River Jordan seven times, as instructed by the prophet to be healed, on grounds that the river was dirty.

He said but General Naama's aide advised him to obey Prophet Elijah, which he eventually did, and was healed of leprosy.

Speaking on the subject "Who advises you?" he said President Weah is surrounded by a team of advisors, but the country is heading in the wrong direction, exacerbated by economic hardship.

The government is unable to regularize salary payment for civil servants amid acute shortage of cash in commercial banks across the country, leading operators to restrict daily withdrawal by customers.

According to PYJ, when the President surrounds himself with bad advisors, he would not see actual problems that lie ahead of him or listen to sincere pieces of advice thereby, he will keep making mistakes.

Sen. PYJ led the defunct rebels Independent National Patriotic Front of Liberia (INPF) that captured and killed President Samuel Kanyon Doe in September 1990 within the Freeport of Monrovia on Bushrod Island.

He is one of key actors from the Liberia Civil War recommended for prosecution by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission for heinous crimes committed during the 14-year crisis.

However, the former rebel leader vehemently opposes calls for the establishment of a war and economic crimes court for Liberia, arguing that he along with other former warlords enjoys immunity.

Story by Jonathan Browne



election in 2017, Senator Johnson took Mr. Weah to Prophet Joshua for prayers and prophecies about his (Weah's) chances of winning the presidency. Mr. Weah won the runoff election against former Vice President Joseph Nyumah Boakai of the ex-ruling Unity Party.

PYJ took the decision after he gave his support to Mr. Weah in the runoff presidential election, and subsequently led him to Nimba to campaign. Nimba

was attributed to nature cause", he lamented.

His comments are in response to the mysterious deaths in Monrovia of three staff of the Liberia Revenue Authority (LRA) and the executive director of the Internal Auditing Agency (IAA) Emmanuel B. Nyenswa, respectively in October, 2020.

Referring to a story in the Holy Bible about the Syrian general Naama, who suffered leprosy and his aide took him to Prophet Elijah for healing, Sen. PYJ noted that General Naama

President Weah issues

Cont'd from page 10

paid or payable for the supply by any person directly or indirectly excluding duties, levies, fees and charges paid or payable on or by reason of the supply reduced by any price discounts or rebates allowed and accounted for at the time of the supply.

According to Executive Order No. 103, Work Permits shall be issued for a period up to five (5) years at the option of the holder or beneficiary and the fees for Work Permits shall be assessed by the Minister of Labor in consultation with the Minister of Finance and Development Planning; and shall be published by Regulations.

"Residence Permits shall

be issued for a period up to five (5) years at the option of the holder or beneficiary. The fees for Residence Permits shall be assessed by the Commissioner of the Liberia Immigration Service (LIS) in consultation with the Minister of Justice and the Minister of Finance and Development Planning; and shall be published by Regulations," states the Executive Order.

"Collection of Work and Residence Permits Fees: All fees for Work and Residence Permits shall be paid directly to the Liberia Revenue Authority for deposit into the Consolidated Account of the Government of Liberia.

On Surface Rental Fees, the

Order directs that henceforth, a Concessionaire shall be liable to pay Annual Surface Rental for unencumbered land only.

"The payment of Surface Rental Fees for unencumbered land shall be in accordance with the requisite provisions of the Liberia Revenue Code, as amended. The encumbrance referred to herein are those resulting from legal claims recognized by the Government of Liberia which prevents a contractor from using a portion of the land granted by Government in the Concession Agreement," the Executive Order declares.—**Press release**

Trouble looms

Another trouble is looming over the rescheduled Gbarpolu Senatorial election in Norman Town, where electoral violence there forced the National Elections Commission (NEC) to suspend the holding of the December 8, 2020 senatorial elections in the area.

The NEC has set Thursday January 7 to conduct the rerun, but the campaign team of Botoe Kanneh, the only female leading candidate in the race is sounding an alarm that the electoral body has taken a unilateral decision to set the date of the rerun and that it wants a readjustment of the schedule.

The Botoe team also notes that NEC is yet to address its concerns raised in a complaint

ideal area due to the security concerns.

"Frankly speaking, we deem it necessary to have the election date readjusted in order to resolve the issues mentioned supra. As the situation stands, we are apprehensive of the integrity these elections," the Botoe campaign team stated.

It is not cleared whether NEC is going to grant the Botoe campaign its request to delay the reschedule election in the area.

Nomodotahun, is a bordering town with Sierra Leone. Elections in the area were called off on Election Day, after angry youth acting on the instructions of the Clan Chief stormed voting centers and took away the boxes containing



Senatorial Candidate Madam Botoe Kanneh

filed before the electoral body last December where it outlined several issues.

In their complaint, the Botoe campaign team requested that NEC create a secured environment for its candidate to effectively campaign; Give back the Voter Registration Cards seized from their supporters by the Immigration Commander who is the Inspector General assigned in the area (Fayiah).

The team further call for the release of its supporters from Prison who it claims are currently illegally detained without according them due process. It also wants the voting area to be relocated from Normodotahun to an

ballot papers and other voting materials.

A rerun of the election was expected to take place there on Tuesday December 15, but violent clashes coupled with the release of a country devil disrupted the rescheduled election.

As per the NEC provisional result from the December 8 polls, Madam Botoe Kanneh, is topping the race by some 449 votes ahead of the ruling Coalition for Democratic Change (CDC) candidate Alfred Gayflor Koiwood in the county's senatorial election. A win in the town with 2021 register voters could seal her victory. -**writes Othello B. Garblah**

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Lampard addresses future after dreadful City display



The Blues' disappointing run continued when they were beaten at home by Pep Guardiola's men. Chelsea manager Frank Lampard insisted he is not worried about being sacked after his side lost 3-1 at home to Manchester City on Sunday. The Blues have won just one of their last seven Premier League matches and sit eighth in the table, seven points behind Liverpool

having played a game more than the reigning champions. Pressure is building on the former Chelsea and England midfielder, but he does not fear losing his job at this point. "I am not going to speak for the people above or the board," he said at a press conference after the match. "I can't answer about my contract, the run and the difficult results, I can only speak as the manager of the club." He added: "I am not

concerned on that. I just spoke to the team after the game about how I expected periods of difficulty. I know it doesn't come easy. "A month ago, people were discussing when was I going to get a new contract. Pressure remains constant. My job is to keep working and pick up the players. "I had tough periods last year. Maybe I had some mitigating circumstances so people didn't view them the same but I had a really good run in November and we lost three home games in December that we controlled. "We lost 1-0, 2-0, 1-0 and to me they felt tough and rough. I am a perfectionist who wants the best for this club. "The first person who puts on the pressure is me. At times, last year, I wanted to push and be even better than fourth, even though I felt it was an achievement considering the ban and the youth in the squad.

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