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# Continental News

## Pope Francis in DR Congo: A million celebrate Kinshasa Mass

Pope Francis has celebrated one of his biggest Masses, with around a million attendees in Democratic Republic of Congo's capital, estimates say. Huge crowds started to gather in Kinshasa well before

ridden country.

Pope Francis was greeted by jubilant scenes at at N'dole airport: "My joy is too huge that I think I am going to cry," Christella Bola told the Reuters news agency.

A 700-person choir, that had

those engaging in conflict in the country.

Warring sides should forgive one another and grant their opponents a "great amnesty of the heart", he said.

He went on to espouse the benefits of cleansing one's heart of "anger and remorse, of every trace of resentment and hostility".

Mattieu Nzuzi, one of those in the crowd said he hoped the pontiff's visit would usher an end to the violence in the east of the country, near the border with Rwanda: "I hope that the visit here of the Pope to the Congo will bring peace to our country because over there, near Rwanda, the people are suffering," he said.

However, the second day of his visit coincides with a continuation of fighting between the Congolese army and rebels.

Wednesday's Mass was tipped to be one of Pope Francis' largest-ever Masses, second only to one held in the Philippines in 2015, according to Christopher Lamb, the Rome correspondent of the Catholic magazine The Tablet.

In an interview with the BBC's Newday radio programme, he said Catholicism was growing in Africa: "This is the future of the church and the growth of the Catholic Church in Africa really is so important to the future of Catholicism." BBC



Africa is considered the future of Catholicism, but some say it should have more representation

dawn, including scores of schoolgirls dressed in white who danced along the Pope's route.

A public holiday was declared, so as many people as possible could attend.

Around half of DR Congo's population is Catholic - the largest Catholic community in Africa.

It is more than 37 years since a pope has visited the mineral-rich but conflict-

been practising together long before the pontiff was originally due to visit last July, had been assembled specifically for the event. The Pope's original visit had to be postponed because of poor health.

There had been some murmurings that the Pope has not been as critical of DR Congo's political leadership as some had hoped, but the Mass was a joyful event, and the pontiff did have a strong message of peace for

## Belarusian President Arrives in Zimbabwe

Belarusian President Alexander Lukashenko arrived in Zimbabwe on Monday for talks with his counterpart, Emmerson Mnangagwa, aimed at boosting "strong cooperation" in several areas between the two countries.

Lukashenko landed in Zimbabwe's capital city, Harare, for a two-day visit and was greeted by Mnangagwa and thousands of ruling party supporters.

The two countries are close allies of Russia. Belarus has backed Russia's invasion of Ukraine, a former Soviet republic, while Zimbabwe has claimed neutrality and refused to condemn Moscow.

The two leaders plan to meet on Tuesday. The talks are aimed at strengthening "existing excellent relations" in areas such as politics, mining and agriculture, Zimbabwe's Foreign Ministry said in a statement.

"The visit is historic, as it is the first such undertaking to a sub-Saharan African nation, by President Lukashenko," the

ministry said, according to Agence France-Presse.

Lukashenko has been in power since 1994. He was reelected in 2020 in a highly contested vote that was widely denounced as a sham, resulting in mass protests. Lukashenko's government cracked down violently on demonstrators, arresting more than 35,000 people and brutally beating thousands, according to The Associated Press.

Mnangagwa's reign has been shorter, coming into power in

2017 after the leader of the previous 37 years, Robert Mugabe, was forced to resign because of numerous human rights violations. Mnangagwa has faced similar controversies.

Both leaders have been accused by rivals and the West of being corrupt and limiting free speech by stifling dissent, accusations that Lukashenko and Mnangagwa have denied. VOA



A guard of honor greets Belarus President Alexander Lukashenko at Robert Mugabe International airport in Harare, Zimbabwe

## Somalia Sends Thousands of Army Recruits Abroad for Training

WASHINGTON — The Somali government has sent thousands of military recruits to nearby countries for training to strengthen the army for its war against al-Shabab militants, according to the national security adviser for the Somali president.

In an exclusive interview on January 26 with VOA Somali, Hussein Sheikh-Ali said Somalia has sent 3,000 soldiers each to Eritrea and Uganda in the past few weeks. He said an additional 6,000 recruits will be sent to Ethiopia and Egypt.

"We want to complete making 15,000 soldiers ready within 2023," Ali told VOA in the one-on-one interview in Washington where he met with U.S. officials to seek more support for Somalia.

The report noted that in November, the Somali government asked ATMIS to delay the first drawdown of 2,000 soldiers by six months, from December 2022 to June 30, 2023.

Ali said the delay was requested because the troops Somalia is expecting to take over from ATMIS are in training abroad. He also said the government doesn't want to disrupt military operations against al-Shabab in central Somalia, as the areas ATMIS troops would vacate will have to be taken over by Somali forces.

The Somali government recently brought home most of the 5,000 soldiers who were trained in Eritrea. Ali defended the decision to send more recruits there, calling the plan "transparent." He said the government is ahead of its training schedule.

He said the government will have 24,000 troops trained and fully equipped by next year.



Security forces patrol at the scene, after gunmen stormed the Hayat Hotel in the capital Mogadishu

The news comes as a report by the Mogadishu-based think tank Heritage Institute for Political Studies (HIPS) cast doubt that the government will meet its December 2024 deadline to have 24,000 soldiers ready to assume security responsibilities when troops from the African Transitional Mission in Somalia (ATMIS) are scheduled to leave.

"This timetable is ambitious because the Somali security services are unlikely to be fully autonomous by then, nor is it likely that al-Shabab will have been militarily defeated," the report said.

"The deadline and the fact the army is in a war while at the same time they are being rebuilt ... we argue it's a tight deadline," said Afyare Elmi, executive director of HIPS and the report's coauthor. "It will be difficult to meet."

"There is no reason for ATMIS to stay or to continue to stay in Somalia," he added.

Ali also made a bold prediction that the government will defeat the militant group by next summer.

"Our ... primary goal is that in the summer of 2024, before June or July, that there will be no al-Shabab person occupying a territory in Somalia. You can note that down," he said. The Somali army, working with local clan militia, succeeded in taking several towns and villages in central Somalia from al-Shabab in 2022.

Despite these successes, Somali security forces have other challenges, including financial constraints, and capability and training gaps, the HIPS report said.

The Somali parliament recently approved its biggest-ever budget for 2023 at \$967 million, but domestic revenue is very low, and two-thirds of the budget comes from external support. That budget allocates \$113 million for the national army. VOA

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# EDITORIAL

## Gearing up for October elections

LIBERIANS GO TO the polls on October 10th, exactly nine months from now in Presidential and General Elections to elect a new President and members of the Legislature or retain incumbent President George Manneh Weah and his ruling Coalition for Democratic Change.

THE UPCOMING ELECTIONS would be the second to be conducted by Liberians themselves since 1997. The 1979 Elections that brought jailed former President Charles Ghankay Taylor to power were conducted by the regional bloc, ECOWAS, while the former United Nations Mission in Liberia or UNMIL spearheaded elections in 2005 and 2011 respectively.

THE 2017 ELECTIONS, perhaps the most enviable in recent history, was conducted under the administration of former President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, who was on her way out, having completed two successful terms thus, ushering in the first peaceful transition from one democratically-elected President to another in more than 70 years.

LIBERIANS HAVE A LOT to gain in terms of peace and respect how they conduct themselves now to October, and beyond in consolidating the democratic dividends of constitutional rule and stability.

ALREADY, THE NATIONAL Elections Commission has released timetable for the conduct of biometric voter's registration, which runs from 20th March to 19th April, in phase one while second phase is scheduled from 21st April to 11th May, 2023.

IT IS TIME for the NEC, incumbent President Weah and members of the opposition to prepare adequately ahead of the polls to avoid last minute's mistakes that may have the propensity of reversing the hand of the clock.

ELECTIONS ARE DEMOCRATIC exercises and everything should be done by all sides to keep them so for the general good, for the best path is always the path of justice, peace and unity.

POLITICIANS SHOULD TAILOR their messages, keeping in mind that they have a seared duty to keep the sanctity of the State they seek to govern, which happens to be the common patrimony.

THEREFORE, ELECTORATE should go beyond campaign T-shirts, banners and flyers to critically examine candidates and their messages in reaching a determination who to cast their votes for and entrust their future to for the next six years.

THIS WOULD NOT be difficult if Liberia becomes the utmost objective for going to the polls other than selfish, narrow interests that soon melts away.

# COMMENTARY

By Willem H. Buiter

## Eliminate the Debt Ceiling

NEW YORK - On January 19, 2023, the stock of outstanding US federal debt reached \$31.4 trillion, technically bumping up against the statutory "debt ceiling." The Treasury is now resorting to "extraordinary measures" to buy more time for Congress to raise or suspend the debt limit before interest or principal payments come due. A failure to do so will trigger a sovereign default.

If you doubt that this could ever happen, think again, because it already has. In 1790, the Treasury, under Alexander Hamilton, took over the debts of the states and deferred interest payments until 1801. In November 1814, when the War of 1812 had destroyed both the Treasury and the White House, the government did not have enough gold and silver to pay the interest due on its debt. And in 1862, the federal government refused to redeem into gold greenbacks that it had created the previous year.

Then, in 1933, Congress, at the request of President Franklin D. Roosevelt, reneged on the government's obligation to make payments on Liberty bonds in gold at a fixed price. And in April and May of 1979, a technical glitch caused the Treasury to miss the deadline for redeeming \$122 million in maturing Treasury bills, with some investors waiting more than a week to be paid.

According to Article 1, Section 8, of the US Constitution, Congress alone has the authority to borrow on the account of the federal government. The debt limit was created with the Second Liberty Bond Act of 1917, which set it initially at \$11.5 billion. Prior to this legislation, Congress had authorized each federal debt that was issued. But ever since its creation, the debt ceiling has provided occasions for shambolic standoffs between congressional fiscal conservatives and incumbent presidential administrations.

Since 1960, Congress has acted 78 times - 49 times under Republican and 29 times under Democratic presidents - to raise the debt limit, temporarily extend or suspend it, or revise how it is defined. In addition to the accidental default in 1979, there have been many other close calls. The most recent was in 2011, when S&P Global Ratings downgraded the US long-term credit rating from AAA to AA+, even though the US did not default and Congress did eventually raise the debt ceiling by \$2.4 trillion.

The periodic chaos and exceptional measures associated with the debt ceiling are both costly and unnecessary. The artificial constraint on outstanding debt means that conflicts about public spending and tax revenues usually have to be resolved at least twice, first when the spending and tax programs clear the appropriate congressional hurdles and are signed by the president, and then again whenever the debt ceiling is approaching.

This is all a matter of simple arithmetic. The outstanding stock of public debt is a historical artifact. Barring default, it cannot be changed. Congress and the state of the economy (which itself may be influenced by

fiscal programs) determine federal public spending (excluding interest payments) and federal tax revenues. Together with the interest payments on the outstanding stock of debt, these figures give us the federal budget deficit for the current period. Add the current deficit to the current period's initial debt stock, and you get the next period's initial debt stock. And the exercise can be repeated for future periods to determine the entire sequence of future public debt stocks.

It therefore makes no sense to add an additional debt ceiling to the congressional fiscal-financial arsenal. The congressionally determined debt limit is either redundant or inconsistent. It is redundant when the constraint is not binding, and inconsistent when the constraint is binding, because it is blocking tax and spending policies that Congress has already voted into law. The cases of redundancy are not damaging, but they do make the US look silly. By contrast, the cases of inconsistency are not just costly but potentially catastrophic.

There are several ways to resolve the issue. The debt ceiling could win, forcing Congress to cut spending and/or raise taxes by however much it takes to keep the actual debt below the cap. Alternatively, the deficit could win, leading Congress simply to raise or suspend the ceiling to accommodate the spending and revenue programs that it has already approved. Compromises between these two outcomes are a third possibility. Or, finally, Congress could do nothing and allow the US to default.

A non-accidental default scenario would be an extremely serious matter. Given the US dollar's role as a global reserve currency and the importance of US Treasury securities in the global monetary and financial system, it would likely produce a financial crisis and a serious recession in the US and worldwide.

What is to be done? The Fourteenth Amendment of the US Constitution states that "the validity of the public debt of the United States ... shall not be questioned." This clause, combined with common sense, argues for a de facto abolition of the debt ceiling. There is no other practical option.

Revoking Congress's constitutional borrowing authority would likely be a bridge too far and, even if feasible, would take too long. A better solution would be to assign to Congress, through legislation, the "deemed authority" to raise the debt ceiling automatically (assuming it is binding, as it is today) in every current and future period by the amount of the deficit implied by the congressionally determined and presidentially approved federal spending and tax programs.

Such an action would be equivalent to a permanent suspension of the debt ceiling. It is time to take the Constitution, arithmetic, economics, and common sense seriously and discard the debt ceiling once and for all.

*Willem H. Buiter, a former chief economist at Citibank and former member of the Monetary Policy Committee of the Bank of England, is an independent economic adviser.*

# OP-ED

By Moses Massah  
UNDP's Energy and Environment Programme Manager

## World Wetlands Day: Time to Connect the Dots, Protect and Restore our Wetlands

Monrovia, Liberia; February 1, 2023: Driving through Monrovia and other urban centers, you see rivers and swamps choking under solid waste and suffocating under plastics. The country's water bodies are slowly and surely being converted into toxic death traps for fish and other living creatures instead of being nurtured for refreshing waters and abundant healthy fish stocks. While the solid wastes directly pollute the waters, the floating plastics cut off oxygen supply such that the country's wetlands could soon be unable to support any form of life.

Swamps, especially in Monrovia, are rapidly being filled to make way for the construction of homes and business centers, without any regard to the fact that these very wetlands are important for soaking up flood waters during the rains.

In coastal counties, fishing communities unsustainably cut down mangrove forests for firewood to dry their fish. This harvest of mangroves destroys the very future of Liberia's fisheries - the breeding sites for fish, which is Liberia's top source of protein and important source of livelihood for hundreds of thousands of fisherfolk around the country. Cutting down mangroves for firewood reduces the country's daily fish catch, thus driving communities dependent on fishing into poverty.

Some fisherfolk are using dynamite and other chemicals in a bid to maximize their fish catch. However, what they are doing is destroying an entire generation of fish, the adult stock, fingerlings and fish eggs, all in one blast. Some rural communities are doing the same thing using toxic plant species such as Dahoma (*Piptadeniastrum africanum*) in pursuit of large fish landings.

The long-term effect of destroying the entire fisheries in many of the country's rivers and creeks using such means, is the systematic and deliberate destruction of the country's food security. It is also destroying a key source of income for many people and an important source of national revenue, were the country's fisheries sector properly harnessed.

Therefore, the World Wetlands Day, observed every year on February 2, is so important for raising awareness on the importance of wetlands, and the values, benefits and services they provide to us, humanity. While they may seem to be "idle" or "limitless", these resources vital to our survival are under serious threat. There is a need to promote conservation and reconsider how we are (mis)using them.

Wetlands include swamps and inland water bodies such as rivers and lakes. According to the United Nations Environment Programme, nearly 90% of the world's wetlands have been degraded since the 1700s, and 35% of them disappeared in just the last 50 years. It is said we are also losing wetlands three times faster than forests.

Recognizing the threats they face, world governments in 1971, in the Iranian city of Ramsar, put together and signed a convention on wetlands conservation - the Ramsar Convention, which calls on everyone to take good care of the wetlands. Liberia is a party to that Convention.

Wetlands are home to different plants and animals that can be used for food (e.g., fish), medicines, and fuel wood. These different plants and animals are sources of income for many people who live in coastal areas as well as around lakes and rivers, both in urban and rural areas.

Wetlands contribute to the national economy in Liberia in many ways. For example, mangrove wetlands are good breeding grounds for many fishes and other water creatures that account for Liberia's fisheries sector. Wetlands also serve as nature's own water filtration system providing clean water to communities countrywide. They also act as water reservoirs buffering against flooding.

When well-managed, wetlands attract diverse life forms including birds and wildlife and can serve as tourism magnets that can put money into the pockets of communities and individuals who care for them. And because most wetland plants are all year-round evergreens, they are important carbon sinks helping moderate climate change.

Liberia has many wetlands but only five have so far been recognized and designated as wetlands of international importance, or Ramsar Sites, and are managed according to international best practice. These are the Montserrado Wetlands, Lake Piso Wetlands, Marshall Wetlands, Kpatawee Wetlands, and the Gbedein Wetlands.

The rest of the country's wetlands are poorly managed requiring individual and national consciousness and choices to stop their further degradation, followed by proactive restoration and protection to safeguard the many services they are rendering to the present and future generations.

What do we need to do as a country?

There is a need to strengthen and enforce the national policy and legal framework for sustainable wetlands management. This will require establishment of frameworks for integration and engagement of local communities, civil society, and the private sector, notably industries, in planning and implementation of wetlands conservation and restoration programs.

Such programmes should include and engage communities and industries for practical clean-up of degraded wetlands as has been successfully demonstrated by the EPA-UNDP Eco-Brigade programme in Robertsport, Grand Cape Mount County. The Eco-Brigade programme trains the youth to start-up green businesses such as lake or beach clean-up and garbage disposal services, and ecotourism activities. Last year the initiative was scaled up to Grand Bassa and Sinoe Counties.

Finally, there is a need to raise national awareness to change behavior of both companies and individuals whose actions lead to the damage and destruction of the country's important wetlands.

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# OPINION

By Arvind Subramanian

## The Age of Verbiage

PROVIDENCE - The annual meeting of the World Economic Forum in Davos used to be the premier destination for renowned academics and public figures to comment on the state of the world. But nowadays, the destination is just a click away. Our social-media-driven news ecosystem is virtually drowning us in expert opinion, inundating us with so much verbiage that little room is left for thoughtful analysis and focused debate - the oxygen of healthy public discourse.

Consider, for example, how quickly and how often the expert consensus shifted throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. China did a far better job containing the spread of the virus than many liberal democracies, until its draconian zero-COVID strategy demonstrated the failure of autocracy. And, despite the surge of infections in the weeks since policymakers abruptly abandoned the strategy, it is still possible that China will have fewer excess COVID-related deaths than the United States. Others argued that polarized societies like the US would fare worse than countries with high levels of social trust, until Sweden became a cautionary tale. And India was considered to be performing relatively well until the catastrophic death toll of the Delta variant revealed the scale of the government's mismanagement - and the latter, too, seems slightly less severe in hindsight, following the country's successful vaccination drive.

Then there is the great US inflation debate. Initially, it seemed like Team Transitory - the inflation doves who predicted that prices would go down quickly - had it right. But then the persistence of high inflation vindicated the hawks who had called for the Federal Reserve to engineer a massive recession to restore price stability. Nowadays, the doves are flying high again, as inflation seems to be declining without the Fed having to inflict excessive pain on US labor markets.

Russia's invasion of Ukraine, soaring inflation, and the escalating rivalry between the US and China have given us the term "polycrisis" - the Financial Times's word of the year - to describe today's confluence of calamities. But the global economy seems to have escaped the worst, at least for the moment, and the International Monetary Fund expects growth to pick up next year. The Economist now speaks of a "poly-recovery." Similarly, the doom-and-gloom predictions that characterized the spring and summer of 2020, the height of the COVID crisis, did not materialize, and the world economy turned out to be more resilient than many had believed.

And remember the warnings of a "winter of discontent" in Europe and the looming threat of wartime energy rations? Instead, gas prices have been declining steadily since the summer. And many of the same analysts who predicted a few months ago that the Chinese economy was about to collapse were proclaiming that "China is back" just a few weeks later.

The current fickleness of expert consensus is rooted in a media environment that rewards instant theorizing and glib generalizations as long as they are delivered with absolute certainty. When reality exposes the flaws in these hypotheses, the expert caravan simply moves on to the next topic without self-reflection or accountability, leaving viewers and readers dumbfounded.

To be sure, expert opinion is still valuable, despite its increasingly ephemeral nature. But experts inhabit the same world as everyone else, and thus are not immune to the cognitive effects of its frantic pace. Given that institutions like the IMF are tasked with providing real-time analyses and predictions in a rapidly-changing environment, getting things wrong or having to pivot on a dime is an occupational hazard. And arguably, the warnings and instant analyses might be responsible for policy actions that preempt worst-case scenarios. Howling like a wolf can sometimes keep the real wolf at bay.

Still, one cannot deny the fact that there are too many overconfident experts making too many predictions about too many issues too quickly these days. A basic economic principle is useful here: the 24-hour news cycle has created a huge need for expert opinion, and the market has simply created the supply to meet the growing demand.

But some correction is required. When he received the Nobel Prize in economics in 1974, Friedrich von Hayek famously suggested that his fellow laureates take an economist's Hippocratic oath: avoid commenting publicly on matters beyond one's immediate expertise. Winning such a prestigious prize, he said, should come with a certain responsibility. The same could be said of all current purveyors of elite opinion.

While voluntarily reducing one's profile may not seem appealing to many experts and intellectuals, it is the only way to avoid debasing the public discourse. Without a modicum of self-restraint, the constant stream of hot takes might end up undermining the informed debate that undergirds all open societies. To paraphrase Ludwig Wittgenstein, whereof one cannot say anything of substance after considered reflection, thereof one must be silent.

*Arvind Subramanian, a senior fellow at Brown University, is a distinguished non-resident fellow at the Center for Global Development and the author of Of Counsel: The Challenges of the Modi-Jaitley Economy (India Viking, 2018).*

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# MORE HEADLINE NEWS

# MORE HEADLINE NEWS

## Cummings envisages a new, stronger, prosperous Liberia

The Standard Bearer of the Collaborating Political Parties (CPP), Mr. Alexander Cummings, has vowed to lead a government by good examples and higher standards, with honesty and integrity. He said with

shortcomings. We will lead by good examples and higher standards, and we will demand higher standards from everyone in national leadership," Cummings said.

The CPP Standard Bearer said he will regularly declare his assets and will demand also

than 40 years of professional life, working, fixing things and making them better, "we will fix our country and make it better for all Liberians."

"Yes, the living conditions of people need to be improved. It will take hard work and a bit of time. But I promise you that together, we will improve the living conditions of all Liberians," the CPP Standard Bearer assured.

Cummings said it is heartbreaking to admit, that Liberia has fallen, lost its way and place in the comity of nations. He however assured that together, Liberia will rise up, and with renewed faith in our national creed of "one nation, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all. We will reach for the skies of our dreams."

He said a CPP Government will restore the lost hopes, in a better, united, more prosperous, and brighter future for all Liberians and the next generation. Cummings said Liberia is not blessed to be cursed, neither its people are not cursed to remain poor, hopeless, and divided.

"Our hopes and dreams may, as yet be unfulfilled, but our future can be better than our past. We can change the conditions of today so our glorious destiny of tomorrow can be achieved," the CPP Standard Bearer told a news conference in Monrovia.

▶ CONT'D ON PAGE 7



collective efforts, Liberians can recreate a new and stronger country, more democratic, secured, just, peaceful and prosperous, that will be the envy of other nations.

Cummings said a CPP Government will foster national unity, give every Liberian the chance to make it, based on their willingness to work hard and obey the laws.

"We will take responsibility for successes and failures and will not blame others for our

of every official to regularly declare their assets. Cummings said, where his government fails, he will honestly admit, noting that "We will always try first to do what we can do for ourselves, before seeking for help from international partners and friends."

He said Liberians must take charge of their destiny, "We must lead ourselves to where we want to go, because nobody will do for us, what we should do for ourselves." Cummings added that Liberia needs fixing, and with his more

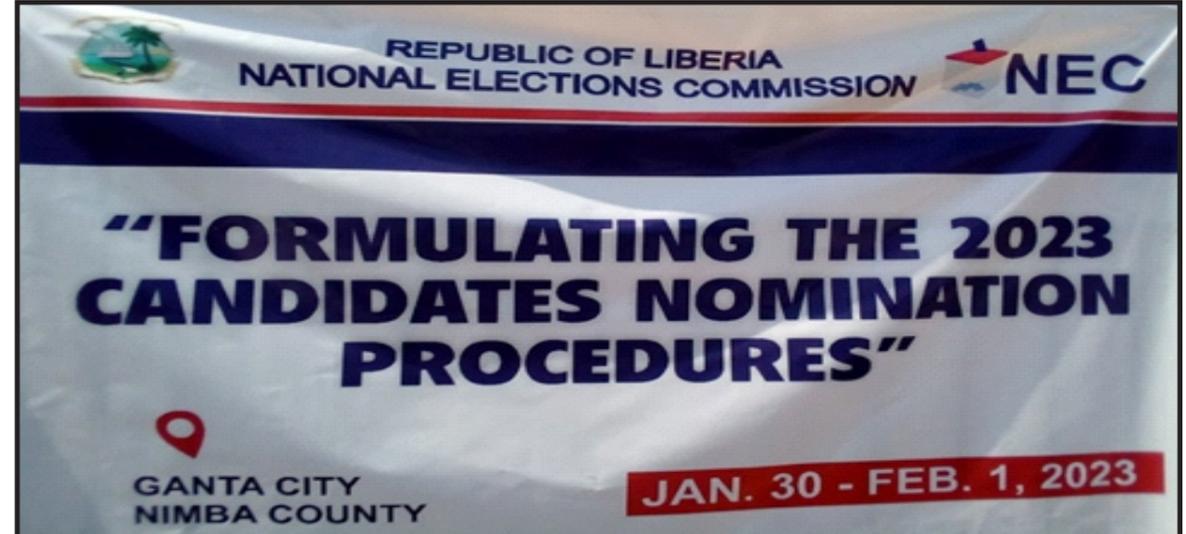
## NEC ends Legal Section forum in Ganta

The National Elections Commission (NEC), Senior Legal practitioners, Senior Technicians and members of the Board of

the legal practitioners, BOC members, and senior technicians discussed under the theme, "formulating the 2023 Candidates Nomination Procedures" ahead of the 10 October 2023 General

Ganta City candidates nomination procedures exercise.

The 35 participants discussed amongst other topics, steps for nominations and procedures, the



Commissioners (BOC), Wednesday ended a three-day Review exercise of the 2023 Candidate Nomination and Registration Procedures for political parties in Liberia in Ganta City, Nimba County. With funds from the NEC,

Elections in Liberia.

A Statement from the NEC Wednesday, 1 February 2023, said the Legal Section and Hearing Office of the NEC, with support from the Political Affairs Section served as leading facilitators during the

nomination packages, authorities of political parties who will be allowed to pick up nomination package, and regulations and guidelines as well as the laws controlling for the 2023 elections.

## Liberia to host Forest and Climate Resilience Forum

MONROVIA, LIBERIA, February 1, 2023 - The Government of Liberia with support from the World Bank, the Government of Norway, and donor partners is organizing a high-level international forum to highlight the significance of Liberia's forestry sector and climate resilience.

The high-level Forest and Climate Resilience Forum which runs from February 2-3, 2023, is designed to catalyze renewed commitments and strengthen partnerships in sustainable forest management as key strategies supporting the Government of Liberia's Pro-Poor Agenda for Prosperity and Development (PAPD).

President George Manneh Weah is expected to officially address the opening session of the Forum.

Other co-conveners of the

representatives of the United Nations agencies in Liberia, the European Union, regional Ministers of Forestry and Environment of Cote d'Ivoire, the Republic of Sierra Leone, and the Republic of Ghana. Other high-profile keynote speakers expected to deliver papers at the event are Professor Wilson Tarpeh, Executive Director of Liberia's Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), including recognized local leaders and champions of sustainable forest management across forest-dependent communities in Liberia.

Liberia's forest sector has the potential to contribute to the reduction of extreme poverty and support increased prosperity along low emissions development trajectory. However, the remaining forest blocks are under increasing threat due to their continued degradation and clearance for agricultural expansion, illegal logging, and mining activities, at



event are USAID-Liberia, UNDP, the Swedish Embassy, the European Union, and the Government of the United Kingdom through its Embassy in Liberia.

The event is expected to mobilize about 200 participants and will feature high-level regional and international Ministers and Directors spearheading forest management in their respective countries. The platform will set the stage for community leaders, global experts on forests, economic development, and climate change, private sector leaders, and development partners to share success stories about the benefits and opportunities the forest sector can offer to the overall economic development of Liberia.

Prominent among high-level presentations and keynote speeches expected to be delivered will come from the Minister of Climate and Environment of Norway, senior World Bank officials,

both industrial and subsistence scales.

At COP 26 in 2021, President George Manneh Weah underscored the importance of the valuable contributions of Liberia's tropical rainforest to mitigating climate change and called on global leaders to make concerted efforts aimed at compensating the national government and underserved local communities whose livelihoods depend on the forests.

In Glasgow, President Weah implored world leaders to establish an African Carbon Credit Trading Mechanism, emphasizing that "with your support, Liberia will be willing to host a conference in the near future to explore the details and structure of such an entity."

Ultimately, the February Forest and Climate Resilience Forum is a realization of the President's call two years ago. The Forum will serve as the ideal platform to rally support for the President's vision of seeking common action to save the planet.

**MORE HEADLINE NEWS**

**MORE HEADLINE NEWS**

**Whapoe accuses CDC of pre-campaigning**

By Lincoln G. Peters

Opposition Vision for Liberia Transformation Party (VOLT) political leader Dr. Jeremiah Z. Whapoe has accused the ruling Coalition for Democratic Change (CDC)

Responding to President Weah's sixth State of the Nation Address late Tuesday, Dr. Whapoe said he will officially file a complaint against the CDC to the NEC for breaching the Elections Law and Guidelines of the NEC.

"With immediate effect,

day violation of the Constitution, and his party cannot continue to keep silent.

"Therefore, we are informing the NEC and [the] general public because if they don't stop, we will encourage others to do so," Whapoe added.

He said the campaign statement and political speeches allegedly made by the president were strictly against electoral laws, campaigning outside of normal campaign periods as prescribed by the NEC.

The opposition politician explained that it's so unfortunate that the CDC government will begin to engage in early campaign activities when it is aware of the elections timetable released by the NEC.

He termed the ruling party's action as an intentional and blatant violation of the elections campaign law, warning the ruling party to desist from abusing power and insulting the rights of the people.

Whapoe recalled that during a program held under the auspices of the CDC National Youth League in West Point, the group's chairman Mr. Emmanuel Johnson told a jubilant crowd that the CDC had already won the October 2023 elections in the first round.

we will expect redress from it [NEC]. However, anything more than that, we will encourage all political parties to follow suit because we are all interested to lead Liberia," Dr. Whapoe noted.

"We are seeing President Weah putting his picture all over the place [concerning] one million citizens rally. We also saw the President in his State of the Nation Address using Article 58 of the Constitution to campaign," Dr. Whapoe lamented.

He considered the president's action as a broad

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of pre-campaigning.

He told a press conference at his Old Road office late Tuesday, 31 January 2023 that he plans to drag President George Manneh Weah's CDC before the National Elections Commission (NEC) for allegedly engaging in pre-campaigning activities.

"We are not going to take the government to court. But, we will complain the political campaign activities of the CDC to the National Elections Commission," Dr. Whapoe said.

**Agriculture sector suffers abandonment**

-SUP calls for intervention

By Lincoln G. Peters

The University of Liberia (UL)-based Student Unification Party (SUP) has lamented an extreme abandonment of the agriculture sector, by the Coalition for Democratic Change (CDC) government.

The campus-based party also complained over food insecurity in the country, alleging that with the ascendancy to the national leadership of the CDC government, the agriculture sector has suffered intensified abandonment.

SUP Chairman Mustapha N. Kanneh to a press conference Tuesday, 31 January 2023 on UL's Capitol Hill campus that budgetary support to the agriculture sector has never reached 5% under the CDC regime.

Kanneh said it still drags in less than 2%. Kanneh argued that the agricultural sector commands the greatest possibility of

absorbing people into employment.

He stated that the high level of unemployment in the country can only be mitigated if the government sees the urgency to massively invest in the agriculture sector.

By 2023, SUP said, Liberia will have a more competitive and diversified agricultural sector that promotes a valued chain for food self-sufficiency, increased exports, job creation, and livelihood opportunities.



Chairman Kanneh mentioned that the sector can also assure the people of food security and adequacy as the government's Pro-poor Agenda for Prosperity and Development (PAPD) promises.

Chairman Kanneh added that for Liberia to realize its potential for sustained economic growth, implementation of the LASIP II

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**United Blind Association cries abandonment**

By Naneka A. Hoffman

The Principal of the United Blind Association school in Gardnersville outside Monrovia Wilfred Gewon has accused the Weah administration of abandoning the Association.

Principal Gewon reveals that since the ruling Coalition for Democratic Change-led government took power five years ago, the United Blind Association has not received a dime from President Weah, lamenting that even the President's State of the Nation Address, he didn't mention people with disability or the disabled community.

Speaking in a joint interview with KNTV on Tuesday, January 31, Mr. Gewon recalled that during the administration of former President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, members of the UBA received US\$10,000 annually as

The visually-impaired educator notes that Liberians are going to elections in October and that the Weah administration in the past five years has not paid attention to their plight.

He said members of the Association have been surviving by donations from churches, humanitarian groups and individuals.

"I am calling on the government to give us direct attention so that those children can't become beggars in the streets. They can become educators and contribute to the society and their life", he urged.

Meanwhile, Mr. Gewon cautioned persons living with disability to vote wisely comes October, adding "because we have been forgotten and yourself will make that decision on how you are being taken care of or treated for the five to six years. So, my advice to the disability community is to



Principal Wilfred Gewon (Right) with some blind students

support to the school.

However, he said since the Weah administration took office, they have not received a dime, adding that they have paid repeated visits to the Ministry of Education, Ministry of Gender, and other places without getting any explanation why the government stopped support to the school.

However, Mr. Gewon called on government to prioritize the education of people with disability, stressing they are Liberian citizens and entitled to equal and quality education like any other citizen.

He said despite being visually impaired, they have the right to life, education, better living, and health, in line with the Constitution of Liberia and the United Nations Convention on persons living with disability, adding that Liberia is signatory to said convention, including other rights instruments.

vote for leaders that will always think about plight of persons with disability because if you do research, persons with disability are the poorest below the poverty line. If we are given attention by national government, our lives will change and improve."

The United Blind Association is a member of the National Commission on People with Disability in Liberia, but he said the UBA on receives rice with no financial support to the school.

Specifically, Mr. Gewon wants government to make budgetary allotment for the school of the blind at the UBA.

Besides the United Blind Association of Liberia, there are other groups of people with disabilities in the country, including the Christian Association of the Blind (CAB) headed by Mr. Beyan Kota, the Group of 77 on Newport Street and the Liberia Albino Association, among others.

Editing by Jonathan Browne

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# MORE HEADLINE NEWS

# MORE HEADLINE NEWS

## Progress on roads

Starts from page 11

completed, with over 75 km ongoing.”

He says through the contribution of Liberians who pay their fuel levies from every gallon of gasoline or fuel oil they purchase,

River View Road to Hotel Africa road; the Kissi Camp to GSA Road which is about 300 meters, the layout and ongoing pavement of 8.7 km of the Kakata City streets, and reforecasting of construction

Project, provided by the Government of France through its French Development Agency, noting that this amount is to be used to improve the livelihoods of three (3) communities in Monrovia, through the provision of climate-resilience facilities such as roads, drainages, community halls, recreational facilities, among others.

He reports an additional funding of US\$40 million provided by the World Bank, through the Liberia Urban Resilience Project, to promote climate-resilient infrastructure in the rest of Monrovia by the construction of new drainage networks, that plans and designs are already being prepared for the commencement of works in this year, while efforts are being made to extend similar activities to three additional cities namely, Gbarnga, Buchanan and Ganta.

The government is reconstructing the main highway leading to the Roberts International Airport in Margibi County.

“My Administration is fully aware of ongoing activities on the Roberts's International Airport Road, and we are working closely with all stakeholders to deliver this project for our people. The success of this project will benefit all Liberians, and will positively impact the safety of all commuters using this highway. I remain focused on its delivery, and wish to assure all Liberians that this project will be a success”, the President pledges.



government continues to expand this program in maintaining existing network and construction of new community roads, noting that construction of 5.4 km road from Johnsonville to Mount Barclay is ongoing and will be completed by June, ahead of elections, while 12km Johnsonville Turning Point to Mount Coffee road is also ongoing, along with the 4.2 km Soul Clinic Road, the 2.1 km Peace Island to 540 Community Road, the 0.6 km Fanti Town Road, and the 2.3 km New Georgia to Gulf road.

Besides, he reports that government has also commenced some new projects, including 1.5 km

of the 3.2 km Bali Island access road.

At the same time President Weah reveals that government has also broken grounds for the 6.5 km Freeport to St. Paul Bridge road, which constitutes a continuation of the grant received from the Government of Japan.

“As we focus on our roads program, we continue to see the significant adverse impact of climate change on our communities and people. We recognize the need to address important livelihood issues as we expand our developmental efforts throughout the country”, Mr. Weah laments.

He says government has signed a 10 million Euros grant for the funding of the Monrovia Integrated Development

## Devilish and unpatriotic

Starts from back page

prevent him from indicting other officials, is just another classic example of the President's lack of moral and political independence to deal with corruption and other forms of abuses in Liberia.”

He claims that many persons who supported President Weah in 2017 considered him the best person to have implemented the TRC recommendations and to create an anti-corruption court, before the elections that brought him to power.

Following President Weah's inauguration, the EFFL joined many Liberians in protesting and demanding the implementation of the TRC report and the creation of an anti-corruption court to demonstrate the government's commitment to

fighting corruption and ending the culture of impunity, he adds.

“Unfortunately, the President, throughout his entire time in office, has shown total disrespect for those who have painfully lost family members in the Liberian Civil War with no interest in healing our beloved Republic”, Gonquoi observes.

He says if the President is to be seen as a reconciler as he said, he must take concrete steps to implement the TRC report and stop accommodating warlords within his government.

He reiterates that a good leader would not think about future elections, but will always think about his or her legacy, and that is the path Liberians expect the President to take. *Editing by Jonathan Browne*

## Cummings envisages

Starts from page 5

Cummings said together, Liberians can write a new story, the story of a new beginning of a united Liberia rising majestically and prosperously, reconciling its past, and forging ahead to embrace a new future of peace, democracy, human decency, and equality. “Our new

story will be one of togetherness in overcoming our difficulties. The new story of a stronger bond of citizenship over partisanship, prioritizing the good of the country, in which every Liberian will thrive if they are willing to try,” Cummings said in a passionate tone.

## Whapoe accuses CDC

Starts from page 6

Dr. Whapoe lamented that Johnson had alleged that there was no need for a second round, adding that all CDC partisans should prepare their inauguration shoes for celebration.

Dr. Whapoe stated that amid these and voter-trucking threats by members of the CDC legislative caucus, including the chair on executive Representative Acarys Gray, it is a show and mere bluff for President Weah to commit to the holding of a free, fair, and transparent election.

Dr. Whapoe continued that the president's State of the Nation Address was filled with self-fulfilling prophecies, praising, glory-seeking, and political campaign statements.

“We firstly would thank the people of Liberia for the level of resilience recently exhibited

since the inception of this CDC-Weah-led government, despite the level of hardships and serious economic challenges posed by this regime,” he said.

He said a deception analyzed from the president's annual message is the issue of stabilizing the Liberian economy since 2018.

“It can be recalled that the economy has suffered serious ups and downs since this president took over,” Dr. Whapoe argued.

He disclosed that this uncertain posture of the economy has left the Liberian people with little or no hope after voting for “a change for hope” government that prices kept going up daily.

He lamented that the young people are all out in the street due to the increased hardship, leaving the majority of young males with no option but to engage in bike and keke riding.

## Females nearly top UL entrance

Starts from page 11

total number.

Of the Fifteen counties, Lofa County recorded the highest number of successful candidates with a total of 1,047 (21.99%) of the total number.

In 2021, Lofa also recorded the highest number, with a total of 1,194 (21.56%) successful candidates.

While the results were being released, Prof. Dr. Julius Julukon Sarwolo Nelson, Jr., said as President of the University of Liberia, the high participation rate in UL's entrance exam process brings him great joy as well as strong reminders of the challenges at hand.

President Nelson said the 9,602 candidates who sat the Second Entrance joined the

over 12,000 candidates who sat the First Entrance to give UL more than 21,000 total



candidates who participated in the 2022 entrance exam cycle.

The UL President said this trend of heightened interest in

the University's enrollment processes point to changes in the higher education sub-

sector which have made tertiary education more affordable and attainable without compromising quality.

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# Français

## Weah décrit les succès macroéconomiques

Prononçant son dernier discours annuel sur l'Etat de la nation dans le cadre de son premier mandat, le président George Manneh Weah a décrit la croissance macroéconomique du Libéria

réalisée dans toute l'histoire économique enregistrée.

Conformément à la constitution libérienne, le Chef de l'Etat a prononcé sa sixième et dernière adresse annuelle devant les deux chambres du parlement réunies en session conjointe au

période fiscale.

A en croire Weah, les recettes faites pour 2022, y compris les subventions, sont de 740 millions de dollars contre 646 millions de dollars pour l'année précédente, soit une augmentation de 94 millions de dollars.

« La grande partie de cette différence », explique le président, « est attribuable à une augmentation de la mobilisation des recettes intérieures pour l'année civile 2022 ».

Selon lui, la totalité des recettes pour la période concernée a été tirée par les recettes fiscales et non fiscales, en particulier les taxes sur le commerce international et les taxes sur le revenu et les bénéfices. Les taxes intérieures s'élèvent à 605 millions de dollars américains, tandis que les taxes extérieures reçues des partenaires au développement totalisent 135 millions de dollars américains.

Pour ce qui concerne les dépenses, le chef de l'Etat a fait savoir qu'en tout 774 millions de dollars américains

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au cours des cinq dernières années comme une exception dans toute l'Afrique de l'Ouest, soulignant une réduction du taux d'inflation de 30% à moins de 7% en moins de deux ans.

Selon lui, c'est la baisse la plus importante jamais

Capitole en présence d'une immense foule de partisans enthousiastes.

Le président libérien a fait le bilan des recettes perçues et des dépenses faites au cours de l'année fiscale 2022. Il a aussi présenté son programme de gouvernement pour la nouvelle

## La Banque mondiale va investir des millions dans le secteur de l'énergie

Le Libéria, la Sierra Leone, le Tchad et le Togo ont signé mardi un projet régional d'intervention d'urgence dans l'énergie solaire (RESPITE) d'une valeur de 311 millions de dollars avec la Banque mondiale.

La cérémonie de signature a été organisée conjointement par le Groupe de la Banque mondiale et le gouvernement de la Sierra Leone.

L'initiative vise à étendre l'accès à l'électricité à des millions de consommateurs existants et potentiels au Tchad, au Libéria, en Sierra Leone et au Togo grâce au déploiement rapide d'énergies renouvelables connectées au réseau.

Plus précisément, le soutien au Libéria dans le cadre de ce programme comprendrait la construction d'une centrale solaire photovoltaïque de 20 MWP et les travaux associés. Cela verra également la construction de lignes de transmission pour la connexion au réseau à Mount Coffee.

En outre, dans le cadre de la partie II de ce programme, la centrale hydroélectrique de Mount Coffee sera

agrandie en ajoutant une capacité supplémentaire de 41 mégawatts, y compris la fourniture et l'installation de deux turbines ayant chacune une capacité maximale de 20,5 MW. Il comprend également l'agrandissement de la centrale électrique, entre autres.

Le ministre des Finances et de la Planification du développement, Samuel Tweah, participant à la cérémonie de signature, a déclaré que la capacité solaire de 20 MW est essentielle pour le Libéria, ajoutant que l'expansion de la capacité de 41 MW pour Mt. Coffee Hydro, qui comprend deux turbines supplémentaires, va changer la donne.

Il a remercié la Banque mondiale, affirmant que le projet modifierait considérablement la capacité de production d'électricité du pays et positionnerait Mount Coffee Hydro pour en faire plus.

M. Tweah a également remercié le président sierra-léonais Bio d'avoir coorganisé la cérémonie tout en lui adressant les chaleureuses salutations du président Weah.

Il a décrit les événements comme des signaux des vents d'intégration qui soufflent sur l'Union du fleuve Mano et la CEDEAO.



## Éditorial

### Se préparer pour les élections d'octobre

Les Libériens se rendront aux élections présidentielles et générales le 10 octobre, dans exactement neuf mois, pour, ou bien élire un nouveau président ou reconduire le président sortant George Manneh Weah et sa coalition pour le changement démocratique.

C'est pour la deuxième fois depuis 1997 que les Libériens organisent eux-mêmes des élections. Les élections de 1997 qui ont porté l'ancien président emprisonné Charles Ghankay Taylor ont été organisées par l'organisation régionale, la CEDEAO, tandis que l'ancienne Mission des Nations Unies au Libéria (MINUL) a organisé les élections en 2005 et en 2011.

Les élections de 2017, peut-être les plus enviables de l'histoire récente, ont été organisées par l'administration de l'ancienne présidente Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, qui était sur le point de partir, après avoir ainsi terminé deux mandats réussis, inaugurant la première transition pacifique d'un président démocratiquement élu à un autre en plus de 70 ans.

Les Libériens ont beaucoup à gagner en termes de paix et de respect de la façon dont ils se conduisent maintenant jusqu'en octobre, et au-delà dans la consolidation des dividendes démocratiques de la règle constitutionnelle et de la stabilité.

Déjà, la Commission électorale nationale a publié le calendrier pour l'inscription biométrique des électeurs, qui s'étend du 20 mars au 19 avril, dans la première phase tandis que la deuxième phase est prévue du 21 avril au 11 mai 2023.

Il est temps que la NEC, le président sortant Weah et les membres de l'opposition de se préparer adéquatement avant les élections pour éviter les erreurs de dernière minute qui pourraient avoir tendance à inverser le sens de l'aiguille de l'horloge.

Les élections sont des exercices démocratiques et tout doit être fait de part et d'autre pour qu'elles soient ainsi dans l'intérêt général, car la meilleure voie est toujours celle de la justice, de la paix et de l'unité.

Les politiciens devraient adapter leurs messages, en gardant à l'esprit qu'ils ont le devoir impérieux de préserver le caractère sacré de l'État qu'ils cherchent à gouverner, qui est notre patrimoine commun.

Par conséquent, l'électorat devrait aller au-delà des t-shirts de campagne, des bannières et des dépliants pour examiner de manière critique les candidats et leurs messages afin de déterminer pour qui voter et confier leur avenir au cours des six prochaines années.

Cela ne peut être possible que si les Libériens font du Libéria l'objectif ultime en allant aux urnes, s'ils réussissent à placer l'intérêt du pays au-dessus de leurs intérêts égoïstes.

# Français

## Weah décrit les succès

ont été dépensés au cours de la même période, tout en faisant état d'un excédent de 34 millions de dollars, ce, grâce à l'utilisation du Trésor.

Président Weah : « Sur le total des dépenses en espèces, 286,38 millions de dollars, soit 37 %, ont été consacrés aux salaires des fonctionnaires de l'Etat, 258,93 millions de dollars, soit 33,45 %, ont été dépensés en biens et services, y compris les subventions et les aides, 89,37 millions de dollars, soit 11,46 %, ont été dépensés sur la dette intérieure et extérieure et 139,32 millions de dollars, soit 18 %, ont été dépensés sur les programmes d'investissement du secteur public.

Le président Weah a fait savoir que l'année 2022 a enregistré des recettes intérieures les plus élevées depuis la fin du conflit civil au Libéria, ce qui, selon lui, est une preuve claire de la reprise économique et de la stabilité macroéconomique.

Le président Weah a dit que son gouvernement continue d'améliorer la

mobilisation des recettes intérieures, grâce aux réformes clés dans le cadre de la stratégie de mobilisation des recettes intérieures de l'Autorité libérienne des recettes, notamment l'élargissement de l'assiette fiscale, la minimisation des pertes de recettes grâce à l'augmentation des impôts, le renforcement de la confiance du public dans le système fiscal, et la mise en œuvre d'une plus grande efficacité et efficience dans l'administration fiscale grâce à l'innovation et à la technologie.

Pour le président, les recettes intérieures sont le seul moyen pour son gouvernement de garantir le financement des programmes d'investissement du secteur public, afin de relever les défis critiques des infrastructures et du secteur social, tels que les routes, l'électricité, les soins de santé et l'éducation.

Il a exhorté toutes les parties prenantes à soutenir ces efforts de réforme en payant leurs impôts de manière équitable et ponctuelle, comme l'exige la loi.

M. Weah a rappelé qu'en 2022, le gouvernement a dépensé 139,32 millions de dollars américains sur les investissements dans le secteur public.

## Sénégal : la société civile appelle Macky Sall à trancher le débat sur un 3e mandat

Le président Macky Sall maintient le flou sur une éventuelle 3e candidature en 2024. Mais des responsables de la majorité multiplient les déclarations en ce sens. Une « ligne rouge », pour plusieurs organisations de la société civile. Après la mise en place d'une plateforme en octobre

plateforme baptisée « Jamm a Gën 3e mandat », « la paix vaut mieux qu'un 3e mandat ». « L'histoire se répète », dit-il.

« Il s'agit d'un remake qui gêne. Ce serait un recul démocratique grave, que de revenir encore en 2023 répéter ce qu'il s'est passé en 2011-2012. Chaque fois qu'il y a eu une candidature à un 3e mandat, il y a



dernier, elles ont lancé mardi un « appel du 31 janvier », et demandent au chef de l'Etat de trancher clairement - et rapidement - le débat.

Comme un air de déjà-vu... Le 31 janvier 2012, des manifestants défilaient à Dakar pour protester contre la 3e candidature du président Abdoulaye Wade. Mamadou Mbodj participait aux rassemblements. Onze ans plus tard, il coordonne la

eu des morts, Sénégal, Guinée, partout. Nous ne voulons pas de ce remake. »

Le collectif met en garde contre un « risque de chaos » dans le pays, et la fin de « l'exception sénégalaise » dans la région. Mais plusieurs voix accusent la société civile d'en faire trop, d'exagérer les tensions. Critiques rejetées par Senghane Senghor de la RADDHO (la Rencontre africaine pour la défense des droits de l'homme).

## COMMENTAIRE

Par Willem H. Buiter

## En finir avec le plafond de la dette

NEW YORK - Le 19 janvier 2023, le stock total de la dette fédérale des États-Unis a atteint 31 400 milliards \$, se heurtant ainsi techniquement au plafond réglementaire de la dette du pays. Le Trésor recourt actuellement à des « mesures extraordinaires » pour gagner du temps, afin de permettre au Congrès d'élever ou de suspendre ce plafond avant que les paiements des intérêts ou du capital ne deviennent exigibles. L'incapacité à y parvenir signifierait le défaut souverain.

Si vous doutez que cela puisse arriver, détrompez-vous, car cela s'est déjà produit. En 1790, sous la direction d'Alexander Hamilton, le Trésor américain prend en charge la dette des États, et reporte à 1801 le remboursement des intérêts. En novembre 1814, la guerre de 1812 ayant conduit à la destruction du Trésor et de la Maison-Blanche, le gouvernement ne possède plus suffisamment d'or et d'argent pour rembourser les intérêts sur sa dette. En 1862, le gouvernement fédéral refusera de la rembourser en billets verts imprimés l'année précédente.

Plus tard, en 1933, à la demande du président Franklin D. Roosevelt, le Congrès refusera d'honorer l'obligation du gouvernement d'effectuer ses paiements en or à un prix fixe sur les « Liberty bonds ». De même, en avril et mai 1979, une défaillance technique conduira le Trésor à manquer l'échéance du remboursement de 122 millions \$ en bons du Trésor exigibles, et certains investisseurs devront attendre plus d'une semaine pour être payés.

En vertu de l'article 1, section 8, de la Constitution des États-Unis, le Congrès jouit seul de l'autorité d'emprunter pour le compte du gouvernement fédéral. Le plafond de la dette a été instauré par le Liberty Bond Act de 1917, qui l'a initialement fixé à 11,5 milliards \$. Avant cette législation, le Congrès autorisait chaque dette fédérale émise. Depuis sa création, le plafond de la dette n'a toutefois cessé d'entraîner des affrontements chaotiques entre les conservateurs budgétaires du Congrès et les administrations présidentielles en exercice.

Depuis 1960, le Congrès est intervenu à 78 reprises - 49 fois sous une présidence républicaine, et 29 sous une présidence démocrate - soit pour relever le plafond de la dette, soit pour le reporter ou le suspendre temporairement, soit encore pour remanier sa définition. Outre l'épisode de défaut accidentel de 1979, nombreuses ont été les collisions évitées de justesse. La plus récente remonte à 2011, lorsque S&P Global Ratings a revu à la baisse la notation de crédit à long terme des États-Unis, la faisant passer de AAA à AA+, même si le pays a finalement échappé au défaut souverain, et le Congrès élevé en fin de compte de 2 400 milliards \$ le plafond de la dette.

Ce chaos périodique et les mesures exceptionnelles relatives au plafond de la dette sont à la fois coûteux et inutiles. En raison de cette contrainte artificielle sur la dette active, les conflits entre dépenses publiques et recettes fiscales doivent généralement être résolus à deux reprises au moins, une première fois lorsque les programmes de dépenses et de recettes franchissent les obstacles parlementaires et sont signés par le président, puis à nouveau chaque fois que le plafond de la dette se rapproche.

Tout est ici en réalité question d'arithmétique pure et simple. Le stock de la dette publique est un artéfact historique. Excepté en cas de défaut, il ne peut être changé. Le Congrès et la situation

économique du pays (susceptible d'être influencée par les programmes budgétaires) déterminent les dépenses publiques fédérales (hors paiement des intérêts) et les recettes fiscales fédérales. Rapprochés des paiements d'intérêts sur le stock de la dette, ces chiffres nous indiquent le déficit budgétaire fédéral pour la période actuelle. Ajoutez au déficit actuel le stock initial de la dette de la période actuelle, et vous obtenez le stock initial de la dette de la prochaine période. Cet exercice peut être répété pour les périodes futures, afin de déterminer la séquence entière des stocks futurs de la dette publique.

Il n'existe par conséquent aucune logique à ajouter un plafond supplémentaire de la dette à l'arsenal budgétaire et financier du Congrès. La limite de dette déterminée par le Congrès est soit redondante, soit incohérente. Elle se révèle redondante lorsque l'obligation n'est pas contraignante, et incohérente lorsque l'obligation est contraignante, dans la mesure où elle bloque des politiques budgétaires et de dépenses auxquelles le Congrès a déjà conféré force de loi. Les cas de redondance n'entraînent pas de dégâts, mais font passer l'État pour un idiot. Les cas d'incohérence, en revanche, se révèlent à la fois coûteux et potentiellement catastrophiques.

Cette problématique peut être résolue de plusieurs manières. Soit le plafond de la dette l'emporte, auquel cas le Congrès doit réduire les dépenses et/ou augmenter les impôts dans la mesure nécessaire pour maintenir la dette en dessous du plafond. Soit c'est le déficit qui prévaut, et le Congrès se contente alors d'élever ou de suspendre le plafond afin que puissent être mis en œuvre les programmes de dépenses et de recettes qu'il a déjà approuvés. Dernière possibilité, le Congrès ne fait rien, et laisse les États-Unis entrer en défaut de paiement.

Un scénario de défaut non accidentel entraînerait des conséquences extrêmement sérieuses. Compte tenu du rôle du dollar américain en tant que monnaie de réserve mondiale, et de l'importance des titres du Trésor américain au sein du système monétaire et financier planétaire, un tel événement engendrerait probablement une crise financière et une récession grave aux États-Unis comme à travers le monde.

Que faire alors ? Le Quatrième amendement de la Constitution américaine énonce que « la validité de la dette publique des États-Unis [...] ne sera pas mise en question ». Cette disposition, à laquelle on peut ajouter le bon sens pur et simple, plaide en faveur d'une abolition de facto du plafond de la dette. Il n'existe aucune autre option concrète.

Révoquer l'autorité constitutionnelle du Congrès d'emprunter, ce serait aller trop loin, et même si elle était réalisable, cette option nécessiterait trop de temps. Une meilleure solution consisterait à conférer au Congrès, via la loi, l'autorité tacite d'élever automatiquement le plafond de la dette (à supposer que ce plafond soit contraignant, comme il l'est aujourd'hui) pour chaque période actuelle et future, à hauteur du déficit induit par les programmes fédéraux de dépenses et de recettes déterminés par le Congrès et approuvés par le président.

Cette solution équivaldrait à une suspension permanente du plafond de la dette. L'heure et venue de prendre au sérieux la Constitution, l'arithmétique, l'économie ainsi que le bon sens, et d'en finir une bonne fois pour toutes avec le plafond de la dette.

Traduit de l'anglais par Martin Morel

Willem H. Buiter, ancien économiste en chef de Citibank, et ancien membre du Comité de politique monétaire de la Banque d'Angleterre, est conseiller économique indépendant.

# LIBERIANS

# DEBATE

Topic: Politics

By Naneka A. Hoffman

Senate Chaplain Rev. Michael Holder's recent attack against former Vice President Joseph Nyumah Boakai is trending, invoking responses across the political divide. Delivering a sermon at the Capitol during the Sixth Sitting of the 54th Legislature on Monday, 16 January, Rev. Holder said Amb. Boakai would never win the presidency because he is too mean and stingy.

In this random sampling, The NEW DAWN asked several residents of Monrovia to give their reactions on this characterization of the former Vice President, who wants to defeat President George Weah at the poll in October. Read their responses as compiled below.



Alexander Nagbe

'The statement from Nimba County Senator Prince Johnson, I see it as not being a threat to the re-election of the CDC led government because Prince Johnson, I know isn't a man of words. Prince Johnson why now? Why he did come up to make this statement that he continue repeating that he will

not support this government since he took office, until we are closer to elections. I know Prince Johnson, as a political vampire there, because vampire only appears in the night where they have their interest then in the day they hide themselves. Why now? Prince Johnson, coming up with this statement that President Weah, didn't

give key positions to Nimbian in his government, only the people from southern. Why he didn't come up with the statement at the time he was elected. So it means that Prince Johnson has certain interest. You know it's a sleep under statement from him Prince Johnson that is why he Prince Johnson continue to say. What I wanted to say that the Nimbian, are more educated people, they are civilize and intelligent people. They have their own choice and decision to make. Prince Johnson, shouldn't take Nimba as his base, farm and home, this is why this man is always doing. So the people of Nimba County know what good or right for them. So if Prince Johnson, isn't supporting the government that's his own political view but I see it not be clear to this government."

"Really you agree or not because Prince Johnson, have been one man in the Liberia politics who haven't been consistent in making statement. His statement can't always been sincere, he only go into the public to make statement at the end of the day for politicians to call he, to get resources from politicians. He isn't really in the interest of the



Samuel C. Quahyou

county, he only speak achievement he don't and work for his own work for the county." individual



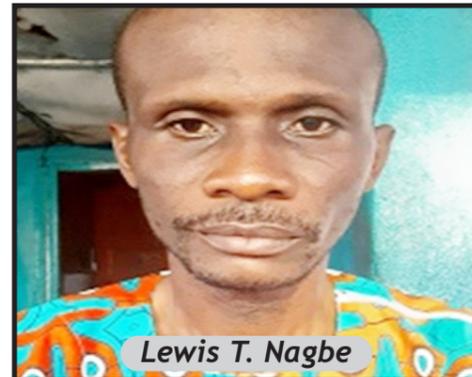
S. Barbington Coleman

"Prince Johnson, statement we are not going to take it serious because Prince Johnson, is a man, who can say something and can't go by his words. Prince Johnson

"The issues of Prince Johnson not standing by this government in this coming elections is very unpredictable because from our observation gathered intern of when it comes to Prince Johnson, making statement intern of support P.J, is one of the political frequent that's not actually stable. He isn't persistent so you can't raise your thoughts to say that there's a guarantee this coming he may not support this government. So I can't say yes or no because life is dimension as of being there could be a changes in his life so to say yes for now and to say no I don't want to say that but, if I want to go back to the past observation concerned Prince Johnson, when it

"I don't want to doubt what Prince Johnson, is saying it's true or false but one thing are can say is that Prince Johnson, has been having his own level of inconsistence over the past years but I think this one appear to be more serious and critical because of Prince Johnson, regular argument this few days there's serious confusion in the NDR setting officials of the NDR now; I saying that the party put CDC second term bid and another officials are saying that they will not support CDC even if we are to go into the runoff they will not support CDC but Prince Johnson, is very

is only making this statement so the government, can call him, so he can't go to world crime court because the international community is serious about the world crime court in Liberia. So Prince Johnson, want to support a candidate who will not support the world crime court in Liberia because he don't want to go to jail. President Johnson made statement on several occasion that he didn't go by it. So he is not a serious politician in Liberia politics. So we the Liberian aren't going to take he serious in this country."



Lewis T. Nagbe

comes to some of the political issues for my own analysis I will not want to guarantee Prince Johnson statement because I am speaking from the past. There are been statement that been made by Prince Johnson, and guarantee were made Prince Johnson, told the Liberian people that he couldn't have turned back but at some pointing time we saw Prince Johnson, not living by his words. So you know base upon those past issues. So I as an individual I can't guarantee he."



Varlee Kromah

unpredictable and he very confuted I don't want to 100% percent believe or disbelieve what he saying but I think it's 50-50 from the look of things from the confusion between his own circle I think is 50-50. 50 in the sense that Prince Johnson, could possibly turn over to the regime properly after the first round if NDR don't make it to the runoff or support the opponents that will go into the runoff."

# Progress on roads

By Jonathan Browne

President George Weah has reported considerable gains made by his government in the road and transport sector of Liberia in 2022 that is the heartbeat of his administration.

connectivity as his government's key focus, immediately after taking office in 2018, including a coaster highway that seems very capital intensive and unachievable in his first term.

However, he reports that in 2022, government engaged the World Bank to secure financing

Harper on asphalt paved road a reality.

He says currently, construction of 20 kms road section between Fish Town to Flewokan is currently ongoing, while reporting funding commitment from partners in the Middle East, including the Saudi Fund for Development, Kuwaiti Fund for Arab Economic Development, BADEA, and OPEC Fund for International Development for the construction of the Salayea to Konia road corridor.

President Weah: "When we commenced our leadership, the total paved roads in our national road network was only 745 km throughout the entire country, representing less than 5% percent of the network. Today, we have increased this number to 1,375 km, with an additional 436 km paved in the primary roads category alone."

However, he underscores that it is important that maintenance on the primary road corridors is continued, to ensure accessibility of throughout the country, even during major setbacks like the rainy season.

According to the President, while new road construction is a priority, his Administration has also committed resources for the maintenance of already existing road assets throughout the country.

Mr. Weah details that maintenance works are ongoing on approximately 500 km of unpaved primary roads, including the 38 km Greenville to Wiah Town road in Sinoe; the 118 km Greenville to Boah Geekan in Sinoe & Grand Kru; the 115 km Pleebo to Boah Geeken road in Sinoe and Grand Kru; the 130 km Ziah Town to Zwedru - Putuken road in Grand Gedeh, the 72 km Brewerville to Compansu road in Bomi; and the 68 km Konia to Voinjama road in Lofa County.

The President says maintenance works are also ongoing along the St. Paul Bridge to Tubmanburg highway and the Harper to Karloken road.

"Upon my ascendancy to the Presidency in 2018, one of my Administration's immediate action in the road sector was to operationalize the National Road Fund office of Liberia. Today, this action has derived immense benefits for the road sector and has enabled the effective delivery of our roads program for our beloved country.

I am proud to reveal that, since my incumbency, a total of 198 km of community roads in 7 counties have been

for roads that will alleviate problems faced by commuters, adding

"I am pleased to inform you that talks with our partners were very fruitful, and we have now secured the full financing required to connect the remaining 75km between Toe's Town and Zwedru City as well as the 10km road corridor between Toe's Town and the Ivorian border."

President Weah says in addition to these achievements in the sector, consultant for the design and studies of 110 km road corridor between Flewokan to Zwedru, Grand gedeh county has been procured through funding by the African Development Bank, adding "I am also pleased to inform you, Mr. Speaker, that this is the last remaining road section between Zwedru and Fish Town, for which my Administration has already secured the financing."

He notes difficulties faced by road users that travel along this particular road corridor, a situation he observes, also causes major impediments to the economic development of Liberians, as the route is a major trade corridor to a large part of the country and the rest of the region, adding that completion of this road will be a game changer in the travel dynamics of Liberia.

The President says giving these major commitments secured and processes ongoing for the preparation of documents leading to the procurement of consultants and contractors, he is optimistic that the nation is on a positive path to making smooth travel from Ganta to

# Females nearly top UL entrance

The University of Liberia has released the results for its second Entrance and Placement Examinations administered in November 2022, with a record 2,358 female candidates making successful passes for the Undergraduate category.

This number constitutes 49.53 percent of the 4,761 candidates who passed the exam.

The 2022 results show that 2,403 male candidates passed the exam (constituting 50.07%), compared to 2,358 females who passed.

Unlike previous years, the latest statistics point to an upward movement in bridging the gender gap between male and female candidates who sat and passed the UL Entrance.

Releasing the results Wednesday, February 1, 2023, on the Capitol Hill campus, UL Center for Testing and Evaluation (CTE) Executive

wrote the Aptitude Test.

Of this number, Mr. Hinnah reported that 104, or 37.68% of the candidates were successful, while 172 or 62.32% candidates were unsuccessful.

34 (32.69%) of the total candidates who passed the Graduate School Aptitude Test are females, while 70 (67.31%) are males.

The 2022 Second Entrance results further indicate that 2,098 of the total number of candidates who passed, constituting 44.07% (including females), will be admitted to the sciences.

Compared to 2021, the highest number of candidates (1,966 which constituted 35.49%) were admitted in the A. Romeo Horton College of Business and Public Administration.

The results also record at least thirty-four female candidates making successful passes out of the 104 candidates who wrote the Graduate School Aptitude Test.

That number constitutes thirty-



Director Mr. Moses Hinnah said a total of 9,785 candidates registered for the entrance for the Undergraduate and the College of General Studies levels.

Of this number, Mr. Hinnah said 9,602 or 98% candidates wrote the exams, one candidate (1 or 0.01%) was disqualified for cheating, while 183 or 2% candidates were absent.

Mr. Hinnah detailed that of the 9,602 candidates whose grades were analyzed, 3,241, or 33.76% candidates passed regularly, 1,520, or 15.83% candidates passed provisionally, while 4,840 or 50.41% of candidates were unsuccessful.

This also means that 4,761 or 49.59% of Undergraduate candidates made either a Regular Pass or a Provisional Pass and are therefore eligible to apply for admission, Mr. Hinnah stated.

For the Graduate School, he said a total of 276 candidates

four percent (34%) of the total number.

The results further state that of 154 candidates who registered for the Law School Aptitude Test, three were absent.

Of the 151 candidates who wrote the Law School Aptitude Test, the results show that 44 (29.14%) candidates were successful, and 107 (70.86%) were unsuccessful.

Thirty-four (77.27%) of the candidates were males, while ten (22.73%) were females.

The CTE results also show that High School Graduates recorded the highest number of successful candidates (4,672), followed by current twelve graders, 62, and 22 candidates from other universities.

The overall results indicate that candidates from faith-based schools recorded the highest number of successful candidates, amounting to 1,989 (41.78%) of the

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# Devilish and unpatriotic

## -EFFL terms Weah's final SONA

**By Lewis S Teh**  
 The Commander-In-Chief of the opposition Economic Freedom Fighters of Liberia (EFFL) Emmanuel Gonquoi, terms President



EFFL C-I-C Emmanuel Gonquoi

Weah's final State of the Nation address as devilish and unpatriotic to the people of Liberia.  
 "We want to consider President Weah's final message as unrealistic expression of a disjointed logic author at a state-style funeral service of a man who

committed genocide." Gonquoi made the characterization on Wednesday, February 1, in a news conference held at the EFFL head office in Congo Town.  
 According to him, there was legislation or practical action taken to reduce his benefits, and that regrettably, President Weah will be remembered for taking steps to reduce civil servants' salaries and not paying them in time.  
 He notes that the government failed in corruption and the rule of law throughout President Weah's tenure, saying the President showed no interest in fighting corruption, evidenced by the broad day butchering of the Constitution to weaken the Liberia Anti-Corruption Commission (LACC).  
 "Fellow citizens, the President lacks moral standing to brag about fighting corruption or protecting human rights when under his administration, Liberia has become a state of terror, lack of hope and uncertainty", he adds.  
 Gonquoi argues that blatant refusal of government officials to declare their assets in accordance with existing laws has simply dashed the President's promise to stop making corruption a way of life in Liberia.  
 "Fellow citizens, the President's refusal to take legal decision against sanctioned former government officials, including his right-hand man Nathaniel McGill, whose senatorial bid is heavily financed by the government in order to

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