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# PYJ alleges exclusion in VP talks

**-Threatens to return MDR to CDC**



Former VP Boakai

Senator Jeremiah Koung

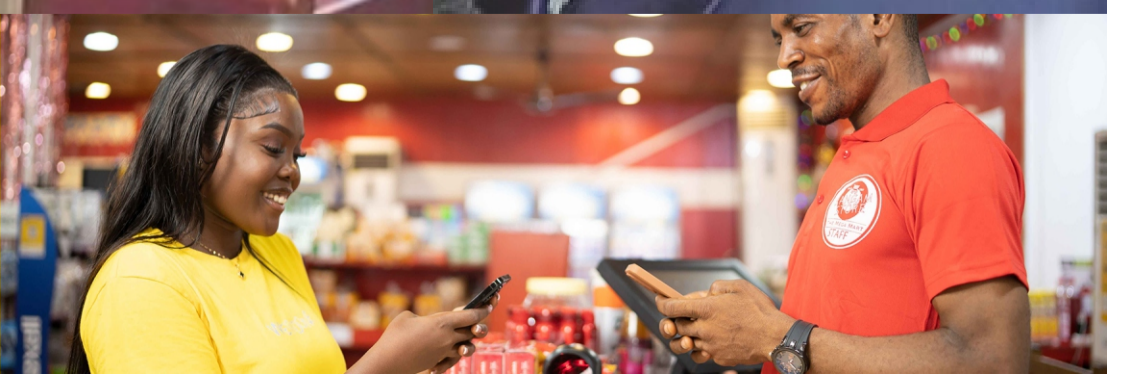
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# Continental News

## Regional Military Force in DR Congo Raises 'Balkanization' Fears

A regional military force deployed to stabilize conflict-torn eastern Democratic Republic of Congo is raising suspicions about the role neighboring countries are playing. Dozens of



North Kivu, Democratic Republic of the Congo

armed groups plague eastern DRC, a legacy of regional wars that raged in the 1990s and 2000s. One group, the M23, has wreaked havoc since re-emerging from dormancy in late 2021. The M23 rebels, who are allegedly backed by Rwanda, have captured swaths of territory in North Kivu province and displaced hundreds of thousands of people. The seven-nation East African Community (EAC) decided to create a military force to respond to the crisis last June. Kenyan soldiers deployed in November, followed in

recent weeks by Burundian, Ugandan and South Sudanese contingents. The total size of the EAC force is unclear, but the troops are entering areas previously occupied by the M23 and are

about the EAC force, and in particular the role of Ugandan troops. Uganda has a history of interference in eastern Congo. Many are also suspicious of Uganda's role in the M23 crisis.

According to a report in December by independent United Nations experts, the Ugandan government appeared to have turned a blind eye to M23 fighters moving back and forth over the Ugandan-DRC border, for example. Congolese government spokesman Patrick Muyaya acknowledged "apprehensions" surrounding the EAC force during a press briefing on Monday evening. But he stressed that EAC troops had been deployed as part of a regional push to de-escalate the crisis, and at the invitation of the Congolese government.

"This must not be viewed as 'balkanization,'" Muyaya said, referring to the division of a country into smaller states.

Since Saturday, M23 fighters have withdrawn from several villages and towns in North Kivu, according to residents interviewed by AFP. The M23 first came to international prominence in 2012, when it briefly captured North Kivu's capital, Goma, before being driven out and going to ground. But the Tutsi-led group re-emerged in late 2021, claiming that the Congolese government had ignored a pledge to integrate its fighters into the army. The DRC, as well as the United States, other Western countries and independent U.N. experts, accuses Rwanda of backing the M23, although Kigali denies this. VOA

intended to supervise a rebel withdrawal. Ugandan President Yoweri Museveni said last week his troops were a "neutral force" that would not fight the M23. The array of foreign troops, and particularly Ugandan ones, is raising suspicions in some quarters in the DRC.

Denis Mukwege, the Congolese doctor who won the 2018 Nobel Peace Prize for assisting rape victims in the region, recently tweeted that the EAC force is composed of "destabilizing states," for example. Congolese MPs also recently asked the defense and foreign affairs ministers for clarifications

website adds. The owner was also ordered to ensure he slaughters the bird on Friday as promised or face a penalty. BBC

## Nigerian rooster loses court battle over noise complaint

A Nigerian court has given the owner of a noisy rooster until Friday to slaughter it after a noise pollution complaint by neighbours, local media report. The court in the northern city of Kano declared the cockerel a nuisance to the neighbourhood for its relentless crowing that two neighbours said deprived them of their sleep, Premium Times news website reports.

One of the neighbours, Yusuf Muhammed, told the court that the rooster's crowing was an infringement of his right to a restful sleep. Isyaku Shu'aibu told the court that he had bought the bird for Good Friday celebrations and asked to be given until the Christian holy day before killing it for a

family feast. Magistrate Halima Wali granted the request on Tuesday but warned him to prevent the cockerel from roaming the area and disturbing residents, the Daily Trust news



## Gunmen Abduct 25 Cameroonians on Nigeria Border

Security forces in Cameroon are searching for at least 25 villagers that gunmen abducted along its border with Nigeria. Locals are calling on the governments to stop armed gangs operating on both sides of the border. Officials in Cameroon say unidentified gunmen abducted the villagers during daily attacks and looting this week in Ako district, on its western border with Nigeria. District officials say several hundred villagers fled from the attacks.

Ako's mayor Nkanya Nkwai says the unidentified gunmen operate on both sides of the

helping villages along the border with Nigeria.

President of the group Abel Shewa says the attackers are displacing scores of villagers every day, most of them women and children.

"Most of the villages have been abandoned as the population flee to Nigeria and to Ako town for safety," he said, speaking to VOA from Ako via a messaging application. "So, we are pleading with humanitarian organizations to intervene, to come in and assist the population displaced from their homes and now they don't have what to live on. Women and children are suffering, and the entire civilian population is affected, and people are living in



People cross a bridge linking Cameroon and Nigeria at Gamboru in Borno

porous Cameroon-Nigeria border. "25 people have been kidnapped so far, we fear that more may have been kidnapped because since Monday, we have not been able to reach out to people at Buku, Abafum and Akwancha border entry points far into Nigeria and no message has come from the kidnappers to let us know why they are doing this. We don't know if those who have been kidnapped are killed, we don't know if they are alive," he said, speaking to VOA from Ako via a messaging application. Cameroon's military says it has deployed troops along the border with Nigeria to rescue those abducted and stop the gunmen. The Mbembe Cultural and Development Association is a Cameroonian aid group

total fear."

Shewa called on Cameroon's government to provide aid to the displaced and pleaded with host communities to also offer them food and shelter. Local officials tell VOA they suspect the abductors are ethnic Fulani herders from Nigeria. Officials say the herders seasonally cross into Cameroon with their cattle for grazing, leading to conflict with farmers. Cameroon's border villages have also suffered attacks by Islamist militants from Nigeria, such as the Boko Haram group.

But this is the first time in more than a decade that officials suspect a large-scale attack by Fulani herders, a nomadic people scattered across western and central Africa. Cameroon's military created a border post in Baoro village in 2012 after violent clashes between Nigerian Fulani herders and Cameroonian farmers over land rights. voa

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# EDITORIAL

## Parties must uphold Farmington Declaration

**LIBERIAN POLITICIANS** or political leaders representing some 27 political parties signed a commitment here Tuesday, 4 April to ensure free, fair, transparent and violent-free elections as the country goes to presidential and general elections on October 10th. They did so under the watch of key stakeholders and foreign partners, including the regional bloc, ECOWAS.

**THIS IS** a welcome step, but it is not the first time. In the 2017 elections that saw the election of President George Manneh Weah, parties similarly penned the Farmington Agreement, named so after the hotel where the pact was signed in Margibi County, outside the capital, Monrovia.

**THE DOCUMENT** was very helpful in keeping parties peaceful and law-abiding during the last elections, instead, channelling their grievances thru the court system. We pay special homage to one of Liberia's reverend political leader and astute lawyer, the late Cllr. Charles Walker Brumskine, founder of the opposition Liberty Party who, after the poll results, chose the legal means in seeking redress to his grievances.

**WE CHALLENGE** political leaders who signed the second Farmington Declaration to uphold the legacy of the late Cllr. Brumskine by rejecting violence as they go to the polls six months from now.

**RECENT VIOLENCE** in Montserrado County electoral district#10 between incumbent Representative Yekeh Kolubah from the opposition and machete-wielding youths believed to have come from the ruling Coalition for Democratic Change (CDC), and other incidences elsewhere in the country, are already writings on the wall that should draw immediate attention of political leaders, stakeholders and government.

**ACT OF** violently trooping supporters from the ruling party into the district to register in the ongoing biometric voter's registration, with the primary objective to unseat the incumbent lawmaker in the pending elections was unnecessary, and should be condemned by all law-abiding and peace-loving citizens, including political leaders!

**WE ENCOURAGE** rival parties in these coming elections to campaign for their candidates in districts and counties across the country, after they are qualified by the National Elections Commission to enable them win, instead of trooping people with cutlasses to terrorize peaceful citizens and force businesses to shut down, as was experienced in district #10. Such attitude instigates violence that political leaders seek to avoid by signing the Farmington Pact.

**IT BEHOVES** political leaders to educate their supporters and partisans that violence has no place in our democracy and should not be encouraged by any side whether opposition or ruling party.

**AT THE** same time, we hail the leader of the Collaborating Political Party (CPP) and standard bearer of the Alternative National Congress (ANC) Mr. Alexander B. Cummings, who took his reservations against the National Elections Commission on the ongoing BVR exercise before the Supreme Court of Liberia for redress, instead of choosing violence. The Supreme Court has heard both parties and reserved ruling in Mr. Cummings' petition.

**THIS IS** the spirit of the Farmington Declaration that all parties should uphold, as we go to elections. Mr. Cummings and the late LP leader Cllr. Brumskine should be hailed as true torchbearers of peace and the rule of law that leaders in our country profess to subscribe to.

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# COMMENTARY

By Shang-Jin Wei

## A Reality Check for the Renminbi

**N**EW YORK - After years of speculation and false starts, it seems that the internationalization of the renminbi is well underway. On March 29, China and Brazil announced plans to trade using their own currencies, rather than the US dollar. The day before, the China National Offshore Oil Corporation and France's TotalEnergies completed their first-ever renminbi-denominated liquefied natural gas trade. Russian President Vladimir Putin recently said that he wants to use the Chinese currency not just for trading with China but also as a form of payment in trade with other countries in Asia, Africa, and Latin America. And Saudi Arabia has been in talks with China since last year about accepting payments for some oil exports in renminbi.

It is no secret that China would like to convert the renminbi into an international currency and move away from the global dominance of the US dollar. While this is often interpreted as a geopolitical move, a way to insulate China from possible US-led economic sanctions in the future, transforming the renminbi into one of the world's leading settlement currencies would also greatly benefit the Chinese economy. Moreover, it would help protect the country from an exchange-rate crisis, which is why other countries, including India and ASEAN countries, are trying to internationalize their currencies, too.

The figure below, based on ongoing research by my co-authors and me, illustrates the progress that China has made in its efforts to internationalize the renminbi. The red line traces South Korean firms' renminbi-denominated exports as a share of its total exports to China between 2006 and 2020, showing the Chinese currency's share rising from 0% before 2008 to nearly 6% by 2020. In October 2016, the renminbi became part of the basket of currencies underpinning the International Monetary Fund's reserve asset, special drawing rights, joining an exclusive club alongside the dollar, the euro, the yen, and the British pound.

While these are impressive milestones, one should not exaggerate the degree to which the renminbi is encroaching on the greenback's position. As the figure shows, the US dollar's share of South Korean exports to China declined from nearly 98% in 2006 to roughly 87% in 2020. In other words, the dollar has gone from overwhelmingly dominant to slightly less dominant. Even in China-South Korea bilateral trade, the renminbi is not even close to displacing the dollar.

[Chart]

Moreover, roughly 99% of South Korean exports to the United States during the same period were denominated in dollars; none were denominated in renminbi. By contrast, the dollar's share of South Korean exports to Japan was 45%, about

equal to that of the yen, with the won and the euro accounting for the rest. In other words, the US dollar continues to dominate global trade, including bilateral trade not involving the US, while the renminbi is essentially used only in transactions involving China.

Part of the reason for the greenback's continued preeminence is that, in addition to its status as a trading power, the US has very large and liquid capital markets where foreign investors can park their dollar-denominated assets. Because of its capital controls, China's domestic financial market is far less liquid, making the renminbi unattractive to international investors.

Theoretically, China could raise the renminbi's global profile by loosening capital controls. But doing so could come at significant cost, exposing the Chinese economy to the (often negative) consequences of US interest-rate movements and global financial cycles. Moreover, premature capital-account liberalization could exacerbate existing distortions within China's financial system, where domestic savings are not always channeled to the most productive firms. The Chinese authorities are keenly aware of these risks, which is why they have been prioritizing financial stability over renminbi internationalization.

There are, however, other ways to promote the renminbi. A series of currency swap agreements between the People's Bank of China and its counterparts in other countries, for example, could help make the renminbi less risky for international firms and investors.

In addition, a digital renminbi could facilitate partial capital-account liberalization without formally removing capital controls. By removing the anonymity of foreign investors, a digital renminbi would allow the PBOC to limit cross-border financial transactions to less volatile types and more conveniently activate a circuit-breaker when needed. Being able to separate inflows of "hot money" from more stable types of foreign investment could convince the central bank to relax some capital controls and allow financial capital to flow more freely.

In sum, while China has achieved notable progress toward making the renminbi a global reserve currency, it is still far from reaching its goal. While it could use a digital currency to deliver de facto partial capital-account liberalization, it will not undermine the dollar's hegemony without going much further in loosening capital controls.

Shang-Jin Wei, a former chief economist at the Asian Development Bank, is Professor of Finance and Economics at Columbia Business School and Columbia University's School of International and Public Affairs.





# Lord, this population growth is everybody's concern

Dear Father:

*Hmm, this huge population growth in the Southeast is concerning ooh. I mean, how the people can be recognized for being the region that is religiously taking contraceptive (doing family planning) yet their population increased by 90%. You say whatin?*

*Father, da na me talky ooh, that Uncle Sam's Cousin from that Nautic Village ooh. The man wor smiling from ear to ear the other day talking nay doing the time the people announced our village population oo.*

*The people said our brother them from the Southeast who never used to like plenty borning bisnay na start borning plenty oo.*

*But Uncle Sam's Cousin wor praising the people after LISGIS announced their population. He said our brother them from the Southeast are noted for religiously taking Family Planning medicines. The thing has been confusing me since. Wait ooh, my son den that wah kinna family planning they been taking na?*

*Father, me, myself here I don't know oo. I think they need to bring that particularly family planning medicine in town here so the people who want to get pregnant can start taking it too. Because if the people in the Southeast are taking it and are borning plenty then they need to bring some in the city for the people who wan to born ooh. -Phew!*

*Phew again seh. You can see da God beating all lor them so. How can people be taking family planning and be borning plenty? I think they wan tell us that since their man chopped president all they are doing is jolly, jolly and have either forgotten to take their pills, even though they still collecting them (pills) but something na adding up here.*

*Maybe like somebody said, since their son chopped president job they all decided to run back to their villages and leave the city alone. But again, me I na too sure because the last time I visited Kru town there was no space to park my car. Let them be there, da God beating all lor them so. Anyway, how is Kasepreko doing these days?*

*Hmm, the man is on fire. The way the man firing at his own people self it leh he na leaving any room for coming back oo. The man bitter more than bitter leave. Any bad thin you wan to hear about the County Giant and him people just listen to him-the man is tearing everybody apart.*

*Bor my son, da na this same man who used to fire all over the place for the people?*

*Father, the man wor only doing him job, bor most of those things he wor saying wor na true. How do I know, because from the way him talking mean da all the good, good thin then him used to talk were so, so lies. Hmm, have you heard about the Wide Mouth pekin and the Sleepy Oldman?*

*They say the Sleepy Oldman wan to carry the Wide Mouth pekin who can be cussing everybody as him running mate ooh.*

*Puah, leh them be there they will all balance when the Footballer kick them around leh plastic bag. They say if you cook yourself in tomato cup, they will dish you out with broom stick. Leh them be there all lor them na know wah they wan.*

## OP-ED

By Moha Ennaji

# North African Feminism's Growing Impact

**F**EZ - North African feminists' work has made significant contributions to improving the prospects for democratization in the region in recent years, particularly in Morocco. By promoting women's empowerment through education, emancipation from social constraints, and knowledge production, feminists have kept progress alive, despite constant challenges and setbacks.

For example, while three Maghreb countries responded to the 2011 Arab Spring uprisings by enacting laws to increase women's political representation, Tunisia has recently slipped back toward autocracy under the authoritarian regime of Kais Saied. As of 2022, representation of women in the region's parliaments varied widely. In Tunisia, the share of women in the national assembly decreased to 16%, from 26% in 2014. In Algeria, women's representation fell from 31% in 2017 to 8% in 2021. By contrast, women's representation in Morocco's parliament increased from 21% in 2016 to 24.3% in 2021.

The environment for women's participation in the region varies in other ways as well. In Algeria, women's organizations that advocate social and cultural rights tend to enjoy relatively more autonomy and liberty than those focusing on political and civil rights, but even the former group is hindered by limits on freedom of expression and poor funding.

Likewise, in Morocco, the women's movement has struggled to achieve political and financial autonomy vis-à-vis the government, political parties, and other institutions. Women's groups work hand in hand with democratic organizations and government agencies on specific projects such as promoting literacy and education, reproductive health, and micro credits. Moreover, the government maintains an annual budget for women's NGOs working to achieve gender equity and sustainable development.

Whereas Moroccan and Algerian feminism was very strong between 2000 and 2010, Tunisia's movement took off after the Arab Spring, owing to the threat posed by Islamist parties and movements. We know this because of the increase in demonstrations, street protests, sit-ins, and petitions signed. In all three countries, women's movements have successfully used both traditional and social media to reach a wider audience, and to ensure that women's voices are heard both on the street and in the halls of power.

Thanks to these efforts, Morocco has introduced both legal and political reforms (amending the constitution, reforming the family code, increasing women's representation, and so forth), and women's participation in civil society has increased. Public spaces have been feminized, and traditional gender roles have gradually begun to change.

In Tunisia, even when Islamists came to power, feminist activists still managed to convince the first interim government to commit to the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women. Since August 16, 2011, Tunisian law has recognized equality in marriage, divorce, and custody. More recently, Tunisia's feminist movement successfully pushed through a new law that provides for greater gender equality in inheritance.

As these examples show, the women's movement in North Africa has made major strides in raising awareness about the importance of women to economic, social, and cultural development. In the process of advancing women's rights, feminists have also made vital contributions to democratization and modernization. While secular feminists have rallied with progressive and democratic forces, women have also worked within the Islamist movement to secure important social and political gains - such as more seats in parliament and decision-making positions in government - since the Arab Spring.

To be sure, although gender quotas, new family laws, and other reforms have strengthened women's political participation and representation, other positive effects can be more difficult to quantify. Many social, cultural, and economic factors are in play, and the success of any reform will always depend on the country and the initial scale and scope of its gender-based disparities. According to the World Economic Forum's 2022 Global Gender Gap Report, North African countries have managed to close their gender gaps in education, health, and employment by 50%. In Morocco, female illiteracy fell from 78% in 1962 to 2.4% in 2021.

Overall, feminists' efforts have transformed gender roles in Algeria, Morocco, and Tunisia, and secured hard-fought real-world gains for women and girls. But though women have benefited from their relatively improved political participation and representation, they still constitute a minority in leadership positions. Despite recent reforms, substantial legal, social, economic, and political inequalities between men and women remain.

As such, many feminists are now focusing on changing the public's mindset and consolidating women's presence in public spaces and decision-making positions. They are pursuing new institutional and social reforms not only to expand political representation but also to make up for decades of discrimination and exclusion. Despite the unexpected backlash following the Arab Spring, women are working together and building coalitions to address their fundamental concerns. The uprisings a decade ago gave women hope and showed them what they could achieve through political organizing and by framing collective demands.



# Rotary Club of Monrovia Hosts Past Rotary Governor Debbie Hodge

The Past President of Rotary in Great Britain and Hodge originated a Rotary Action Group against Slavery and currently leads in Senegal to begin its life-saving work. During her time in Liberia, the Rotary

Hodge to the Mother Pattern College of Health Sciences where an ongoing healthcare workers scholarship has graduated over 60 professionals, some of whom she also visited currently working at Wellness Partners Clinic in CongoTown. Other activities included a site visit to the Liberia Learning Center at the Paynesville Town Hall - a project under construction in partnership with Empowerment Squared and supported by the Rotary Foundation and clubs in Liberia and Canada. The Dignity Liberia Fistula Project in Todee, Montserrado and the

connect with a Rotary leader with whom we have already partnered with through our organization's global networks to support activities right here in Liberia. By visiting she also experiences our local context and better appreciates the impact of our collective efforts through Rotary". Rotary is a global organization of people who continue to set themselves apart by encouraging high ethical standards in their respective professions, building goodwill and peace and above all dedicating their time to provide humanitarian services to fellow citizens. The Rotary Club of Monrovia was



Rotarians visit ongoing construction at the Liberia Learning Center at Paynesville City Hall - a Rotary supported project.

Ireland has recently ended a visit to Liberia of Monrovia. Having Rotary's global efforts to support the Mercy Ships medical mission work. The Rotary Club of leader held several meetings and engagements around ongoing and future interventions along



President of Rotary Club of Monrovia - Mai Bright-Urey



Debbie and David visiting Home of Dignity health center which offers palliative care

Palliative Care program at the Home of Dignity in Molton Corner, Brewerville were also important stops in her work in spiritual counselling.

originally chartered by Rotary International on January 24, 1964, as the first Rotary Club in Liberia. The members of the Rotary Club of Monrovia use their professions, knowledge, and resources to support and serve their communities in Monrovia and across the country.

recently ended her tenure overseeing Rotary International's service Monrovia has led efforts among Rotary Clubs in West Africa to raise funds for the Rotary's priority focus areas. In visits to ongoing

Members of the host club, the Rotary Club of Monrovia were delighted to receive and welcome their colleague to Liberia. Past President David Frankfort led coordination of the visit and stated "It has been a bonus having Debbie in Liberia to explore ways to further support Rotary's efforts in Liberia". Rotarian Mai Bright-Urey, current President of the Rotary Club of Monrovia also expressed her excitement at the exposure and opportunities such a visit affords, saying "this visit by Rotarian Debbie allows us to personally

The work of Rotary is grounded around eight core areas of focus, both globally and locally. These include:

- 1) Ending Polio
- 2) Promoting Peace
- 3) Fighting Disease
- 4) Providing Clean Water
- 5) Supporting Education
- 6) Saving Mothers and Children
- 7) Growing Local Economies
- 8) Protecting the Environment



Debbie and David visit Wellness Partners Clinic where 2 Rotary scholars work and have recruited other young professionals to join Rotaract.

and activities across Great Britain and Ireland, Ms. new Global Mercy ship projects, which has recently arrived members accompanied Ms.



# MORE HEADLINE NEWS

# MORE HEADLINE NEWS

## Lack of funding and drug supply affecting operations at Chief Jallah Lone's Hospital

**-Officials tell U.S. Amb. McCarthy as he concludes visit to Bomi & Gbarpolu Counties**

Lack of funding and drug supply is affecting the smooth and effective operation at the Chief Jallah Lone Hospital in Bopolu, Gbarpolu County, according to officials. According to a US Embassy release, the officials told

treatment and access for citizens in the county. County Health Officer and other health officials also informed Amb. McCarthy and USIAD Director Wright during their visit that the hospital has not received its full funding as guaranteed in the budget.

promised to take back these observations to Monrovia, and encouraged local journalists to ask questions and discover what is happening to the budgeted funds. After all, it is impossible to expect institutions to function when they are resource-starved.



Amb. McCarthy being received by Traditional leaders and officials

visiting US Ambassador Michael A. McCarthy and delegation which completed toured of the county on Tuesday that the hospital is yet to receive its last quarter of allotment of medicine, negatively affecting

The hospital is not alone, County officials also informed Amb. McCarthy that neither the city nor the county had received the funding promised to them in the budget passed by the Liberian legislature. Amb. McCarthy in a remark

The release said Amb. McCarthy, along with USAID Country Director Jim Wright, visited Bomi and Gbarpolu counties from April 3-4, 2023. It said as U.S. Ambassador to

▶ CONT'D ON PAGE 11

## 'No soldier will be left behind'

**-Morlu assures CDCians**

By Lewis S. Teh

Coalition for Democratic Change (CDC) chairman Mulbah K. Morlu has assured partisans, executives and auxiliary groups that none of them will be left behind if President George Manneh Weah is re-elected.

Mr. Morlu was particularly addressing those who were left out during the first term of President Weah. He encouraged them to register and vote in the October 10 presidential and legislative elections.

"We want to assure you that as we all have registered to give President Weah a one-round victory, you can be [assured] that no soldier will be left behind," said Mr. Morlu Thursday, 6 April 2023.

"The sacrifices that some of you have made for this party about 18 years ago will end following the pronouncement of Weah [as] winner," he said further during a press conference at the party headquarters.

The CDC Chairman's statement comes amid criticism by some partisans who said they were left out

during the first term of the government. Some have expressed regrets supporting the ruling party.

Morlu acknowledged the challenges that some partisans are encountering daily, vowing that it will never happen again.

"The CDC is quite aware of



Chairman Mulbah K. Morlu

the ongoing challenges that are confronting members of our party, but we want to assure you that these challenges may not occur when President Weah gets re-elected," he said.

According to him, during the 2017 election, the CDC

campaigned on the mantra of change. Morlu noted that when the party assumed the presidency, in the first phase it introduced a change. He said the party seeks to construct that change into reality in the second phase. Morlu argued that if President Weah must turn into reality the change he

introduced during his first six years, then the issue of voter registration can't be overly emphasized. "We're determined that President Weah will win in the first round, reason being ... he

▶ CONT'D ON PAGE 11

## Tradition or Constitution?

By: Joseph Titus Yekeryan

Bong County: It seems like the newly appointed Deputy Director for Administration at the Liberia Civil Aviation Authority, George Mulbah believes in tradition rather than the constitution; the most powerful book that governs the state.

This stems from a recent statement he made on Radio Gbarnga that has raised public outcry in almost every part of the county.

Recently, the former District #3 Lawmaker described some aspirants in Bong County as migrants who do not understand the traditional history of the county. Mulbah said some of those aspiring for legislative seats in the County do not have any

citizens of the country who meet the labeled qualifications to contest in the country. Article 30 a. states "For the senate, one has to attain the age of 30 years and for the House of Representative 25 years.

"B" of the same article states that the Contestants should "be domiciled in the country or constituency to be represented not less than one year prior to the time of the election and be a taxpayer"

Even though he is an Attorney at Law, Mr. Mulbah is being criticized for completely ignoring this article of the constitution by telling citizens of Bong County to go for someone who has traditional attachment.

On the other hand, George Mulbah has already declared support for the People's Unification Party official and District #5 Representative Edward Karfiah who



traditional attachment with Bong County but are trooping in to contest for positions they do not even merit.

"Some of them do not have any ideas or they don't know our tradition, but they are running coming because they want power. You need to be careful; you can't support someone who does not know your tradition. They are migrants."

"These are the people who would destroy the county if they are elected. So, you need to be very careful as voters" Mulbah adds. Johnny Kpeke Sr. is one of the main aspirants who is being criticized for coming from Lofa County to contest in Bong.

Many people believe that Mr. Mulbah referring to Johnny's candidacy but he, however, did not call names during his Radio Gbarnga's interview. His statement about traditional attachment is completely contrary to the country's constitution as there is absolutely nothing in the constitution that talks about traditional attachments before one can contest an elected position.

Article 30 of the 1986 constitution gives the right to

is contesting for the senatorial seat.

It would be a two house-race for Bong County's 2023 Senatorial position between Representative Karfiah and Kpehe.

Senator Prince K Moya has not openly declared support for Kpehe but almost all of his office staffers and well known supporters are already in line with Kpehe's senatorial bid despite having incumbent Senator, Dr. Henrique Tokpa (the man considered as the father of Prince K. Moya) in the election. Aspirant Johnny Kpehe has, however, cautioned leaders and residents of the county against divisive and tribal politics.

Kpehe said tribal politics undermine democracy and further place the country in the gab of instability; adding that if Bong County and Liberia should continue to enjoy its existing peace, there should be no room for tribalism in the country's slowly growing democracy. "The constitution is very clear about who to contest, the standard is set for those contesting for the Representative, Senate and President positions so I want to caution you all to look up to what the constitution says rather than listening to people who want to divide you for little or nothing" Kpehe adds.



MORE HEADLINE NEWS

MORE HEADLINE NEWS

Lack of funding and drug supply

Starts from page 6

GoL denies AFELL's claims

The Liberian Government on Thursday April 6 released the below statement in which it denied claims that

narrative through its President, Atty. Philomena Williams. In his communication to the Speaker of the House of Representatives, Bhofal

Williametta Saydee-Tarr who encouraged this essential affirmative action bill that was sponsored by the Women's Legislative Caucus. During their long legislative debates on the matter, the deserved vocal support of Atty Williams was conspicuously absent.

The President's letter has been sent to the leadership of the National Legislature. We encourage Atty. Williams to use her vocal advocacy in support of the President's public and demonstrable commitment to gender balance at the lawmaking body. The Government also encourages the media and civil society to continue being the moral conscience of society and avoid being made pawns by politicians.

It can be recalled that the AFELL President made similar unsubstantiated claims in the case involving the death of the daughter of former Chief Justice Gloria Musu Scott, even before police investigation began in earnest.

This unfortunate trend seems to be gaining traction as the country moves closer to elections in October. The government urges those expected to hold it to account to ensure the public discourse is grounded in fact, instead of allowing themselves to get drawn in the different political machinations."



President George Weah had voted the section of the New Election Law intended to guarantee 30 percent women's participation.

Below is the full statement: "It has come to the attention of the Government of Liberia that some media entities are wrongly positing that President George M. Weah vetoed the section of the New Elections Law intended to guarantee 30 percent women's participation in the National Legislature. Liberia's Association of Female Lawyers has also elevated this false

Chambers, dated March 9, 2023, the President made clear his support for this crucial aspect of the legislation submitted for his approval, while detailing reasons for his objection to other sections. Therefore, it is surprising that the media and some civil society actors, including AFELL, have elected to maliciously skew this fact. The Liberian leader has consistently expressed his support for greater women participation in all aspects of governance; the reason he backed the effort of Vice President Jewel Howard Taylor and Gender Minister

Liberia's democracy taking steps backward -prominent female observer warns

By: Naneka Hoffman

Young Liberian female, Ms. Alpha Faith Kemokai, observes that instead of building on gains made in 2018, with the inauguration of a democratically-elected President, Liberia's democracy seems to be taking a few steps backward, which could derail the peace fought so hard for with the help of international partners.

Ms. Kemokai further notes that recently, Liberians witnessed actions that pose serious threats to the peace, characterized by hate speeches and threats of violence from actors in the body politics, pointing "There have been cases of politically-inspired violence against female candidates and parties that have different political alignments."

Speaking at the signing of the Farmington Declaration by leaders of 27 political parties in Margibi County this week, she lamented that such behaviors are counterproductive to enhancing the country's democracy and sustaining its hard-fought peace, pondering whether Liberians are so quick

to forget the past after 20 years of hostilities when lives were lost and property destroyed.

She calls on Government to ensure that the electoral laws of the country are respected and the electoral process takes

of the court system for aggrieved parties to get redress.

At the same time, she urges political leaders and political parties to caution their supporters against acts and utterances that could cause



Mrs Alpha Faith Kemokai

place void of discrimination, disinformation, hate speech, and incitement that could lead to violence.

According to her, this will address dissatisfaction as Liberians approach general and presidential elections on October 10, stressing that the independence of the judiciary is something that cannot be overemphasized and the State should guarantee independence

chaos and disrupt the peace.

Mrs. Kemokai continues that what hurts most is the rise of militancy in most political parties, lamenting that while politicians' children are in other countries living better lives, they use other people's children as militants to cause violence, using nice words like "Rescue, Hope, and Liberia First", among others.

Liberia, and not just to Monrovia, it was important for the Ambassador to travel and see a country firsthand, getting out of the capital to understand what the reality is like on the ground.

Talking about his trip, the release quoted Amb. McCarthy as saying, "This was my second visit to Bomi and Tubmanburg, but my first to Gbarpolu and Bopolu. I have wanted to visit for the last two years, and I'm pleased to have finally made the journey.

During my trip I had the opportunity to meet with an extraordinary mix of people doing amazing work for their communities - often with support from the American people whether directly through USAID, or in partnership with our Mission and other international partners.

These meetings included local traditional and political leaders, health workers striving diligently to improve the lives of those around them, as well as observing the vitally important voter registration process in both counties.

I've now driven the road from Tubmanburg to Bopolu, and I can tell you how much communities would benefit from improved local infrastructure, which would not only facilitate transportation and trade, but also improve local economic conditions."

In both Tubmanburg and in Bopolu, Ambassador McCarthy and Director Wright directly



Touring a voter registration center

observed the voter registration process at two registration sites. Both sites proved that overall, the biometric voter registration process is effective, despite some initial challenges with the new technology, and that registration is being completed efficiently, fairly, and peacefully.

The Ambassador emphasized the importance of local poll workers having signed contracts and being paid during meetings with the NEC magistrate in both counties. Both magistrates confirmed that the contracts would be signed before the end of the week and that the NEC Headquarters was on track to provide funding for the payments, which would be made after the registration process was complete and the poll workers had satisfactorily completed their assignments.

In an interview with Radio Bomi, one of 30 radio stations in Liberia that is part of a USAID-funded media project, Ambassador McCarthy called on Liberian citizens to register to

vote so that they can help shape the future of their country and participate in the democratic process during the upcoming elections. In Tubmanburg, Ambassador McCarthy and Director Wright were warmly welcomed by the Bomi County Superintendent, traditional leaders, and other county and city officials.

They toured the Bomi County Service center, meeting with staff, and learning how delays in implementing the excellent decentralization law have negatively affected the services that citizens can receive in Bomi.

Visiting the Forestry Training Institute (FTI), the Ambassador and USAID Director directly saw the benefits of USAID and U.S. Forest Service support during a conversation held with current FTI students held in a conference hall constructed with USAID funding. Liberia has incredible forestry resources, but illegal logging and unregulated use of the forest is rapidly degrading the forests of Liberia.

Students trained at FTI will have a significant role to play in securing this important resource. The Ambassador and Director Wright were introduced to the Riders for Health specimen transport team, by Dr. Rachel Idowu, U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Country Director in Liberia.

Riders has exclusive responsibility for collecting

communicable disease specimens from health facilities in all 15 counties, then quickly and safely transporting health specimens to Margibi County for testing.

These riders, under extreme conditions, are at the front lines of rapidly detecting and controlling future outbreaks and are an incredible resource for Liberia and the international community.

In Tubmanburg, the Ambassador and Director Wright visited the USAID- and WHO-funded oxygen plant that has been a game changer for Bomi County and neighboring health clinics. This plant produces life-saving oxygen that can be provided throughout the county, and across counties in the future, to help reduce costs and save time.

It is so important to never forget the atrocities committed during Liberia's civil wars. In an act of remembrance and respect, the Ambassador visited the Maher Bridge War Memorial outside of Tubmanburg to hear firsthand from the community and a survivor about the incident that inspired the memorial.



# Français

## Weah plaide pour des élections non violentes

Le président George Manneh Weah a supplié les acteurs politiques de rejeter tous les actes de violence électorale.

Le pays se dirige vers des élections présidentielles et législatives cruciales en octobre.

l'ex-dirigeant de Coca-Cola Alexander B. Cummings.

M. Weah a lancé l'appel le mardi 4 avril 2023 lorsque 27 partis politiques et acteurs électoraux ont signé la Déclaration de Farmington River dans le comté de Margibi.

Signé à l'hôtel Farmington,

stabilité doivent être préservées.

Il estime que l'élection imminente représente une opportunité pour le pays de renforcer une culture politique approfondie qui respecte la liberté, la justice, l'égalité et les droits de l'homme.

Le président Weah a fait valoir que depuis son accession à la présidence en 2018, la Commission électorale nationale a organisé avec succès plusieurs élections partielles et un référendum qui ont été reconnus par toutes les parties prenantes comme étant pacifiques, libres, équitables et transparents.

Il incombe, selon lui, à tous les acteurs politiques de reconnaître le caractère central de la paix lors de ces élections et de travailler collectivement pour mettre en place "un processus crédible, inclusif et pacifique".

Il a rappelé que le Libéria est une réussite post-conflit qui doit continuer sur la voie de la démocratie, de la paix et de la sécurité.

Le président Weah a décrit la signature de la Déclaration de Farmington comme une autre réalisation marquante



Le président brigue un second mandat de six ans face à plusieurs candidats de l'opposition à l'élection présidentielle, dont l'ancien vice-président libérien Joseph Nyumah Boakai et

l'instrument oblige les signataires à promouvoir une élection pacifique, non violente, libre et équitable dans le pays.

Le président Weah a dit que le pays se trouve à un moment décisif et que sa paix, sa démocratie et sa

▶ CONT'D ON PAGE 09

## Mali : Kidal sous tension après le survol d'un avion de l'armée

Au Mali, un avion de l'armée malienne a survolé la ville de Kidal, dans le nord, ce mercredi 5 avril dans l'après-midi. Les ex-rebelles indépendantistes de la CMA, signataires de l'accord de paix de 2015, et dont Kidal est le fief, ont effectué des tirs de sommation. De quoi susciter une forte tension à la veille du 11e anniversaire de la proclamation d'indépendance de l'Azawad.

Il est environ 14 heures quand l'avion de chasse de l'armée malienne débute ses rotations, à basse altitude, au-dessus de Kidal. Aucune frappe, mais les ex-rebelles de la Coordination des mouvements de l'Azawad (CMA) répondent par des tirs de sommation.

Des survols similaires ont également eu lieu à Ber, Anefif et Amassine. « C'est un acte hostile, estime un cadre de la CMA, puisque ces avions ont survolé par surprise des zones sous contrôle de la CMA. »

De mémoire de plusieurs sources kidaloises, un avion militaire malien n'avait pas survolé Kidal de cette

manière - certains ont d'abord cru à une attaque - depuis 2012, année durant laquelle avait éclaté la rébellion indépendantiste.

« Provocation grave »

Depuis, il y a eu le cessez-le-feu de 2014 et l'accord de paix de 2015, mais la tension est actuellement au plus haut entre les groupes armés signataires et les autorités maliennes de transition, qui ne se parlent plus depuis des mois et se renvoient mutuellement la responsabilité des blocages dans l'application de l'accord de paix.

Beaucoup craignent une

reprise des hostilités, que le médiateur algérien s'efforce d'éviter.

Dans un communiqué publié mercredi après-midi, la CMA dénonce une « violation » du cessez-le-feu, une « provocation grave », et « décline toute responsabilité et conséquences issues de tels agissements ».

Onzième anniversaire

Plusieurs cadres de la CMA joints par RFI estiment qu'il s'agit aussi d'une manœuvre

▶ CONT'D ON PAGE 09



## Kidal sous tension après le survol d'un avion de l'armée

## Éditorial

### Que les partis respectent la déclaration de Farmington

Des leaders politiques qui représentent 27 partis politiques ont signé mardi 4 avril un engagement qui consiste à veiller à ce que les prochaines élections soient libres, justes, transparentes et sans violence.

Les leaders politiques ont signé l'accord en présence des partenaires internationaux, dont la CEDEAO. C'est une étape bienvenue, quoique ce ne soit pas la première fois.

Lors des élections de 2017 qui ont vu l'élection du président George Manneh Weah, les partis ont également signé l'accord de Farmington, du nom de l'hôtel où le pacte a été signé dans le comté de Margibi, à l'extérieur de la capitale, Monrovia.

Le document a été très indispensable au maintien de la paix et au respect des lois électorales lors des dernières élections. Durant cette période, les partis ont dû canaliser leurs griefs vers le système judiciaire. Nous rendons ainsi un hommage particulier à l'un des révérends leaders politiques et avocat astucieux du Libéria, feu Me Charles Walker Brumskine, fondateur du parti de la Liberty Party qui, après les résultats du scrutin, a choisi les moyens légaux pour obtenir réparation de ses griefs.

Nous exhortons les dirigeants des partis politiques qui ont signé la deuxième déclaration de Farmington à défendre l'héritage de feu Me Brumskine en rejetant la violence.

Les récentes violences dans la circonscription électorale n° 10 du comté de Montserrado entre le représentant sortant Yekeh Kolubah de l'opposition et des jeunes armés de machettes qui seraient des militants de la coalition pour le changement démocratique (CDC), la coalition au pouvoir, et d'autres incidents ailleurs dans le pays, doivent attirer immédiatement l'attention des politiques, des parties prenantes et du gouvernement.

Le fait que le parti au pouvoir dirige violemment ses partisans dans le district 10 pour s'inscrire, dans le but principal de renverser le législateur sortant lors des prochaines élections, ne peut être toléré. C'est un acte que nous devons tous condamner, en tant que citoyens épris de paix, y compris les responsables politiques !

Nous encourageons les partis rivaux à faire campagne pour leurs candidats de manière civilisée et dans le respect de l'état de droit, afin qu'ils puissent gagner dans la transparence et des conditions démocratiques acceptables. Il servira à rien de rassembler les gens avec des coutelas pour terroriser les citoyens pacifiques et forcer les entreprises à fermer, comme cela a été le cas dans le district #10. C'est une incitation à la violence. C'est heureusement ce que chaque leader politique cherche à éviter en signant le Pacte de Farmington.

Il leur incombe d'éduquer et de sensibiliser leurs sympathisants et partisans et leur faire comprendre que la violence n'a pas sa place dans notre démocratie.

Dans le même temps, nous saluons M. Alexander B. Cummings, leader politique de la Collaboration des Partis politiques (CPP) et du Congrès national alternatif (ANC), qui a déposé un recours à la Cour suprême du Libéria contre la Commission électorale nationale sur l'opération d'enregistrement des électeurs, pour obtenir réparation. Il n'a pas fait recours à la violence. La Cour suprême a entendu les deux parties et a réservé sa décision sur la requête de M. Cummings.

Pendant que nous nous dirigeons vers les élections, tous les partis sont tenus de respecter l'esprit de la Déclaration de Farmington. Nous saluons ainsi au passage M. Cummings et feu Me Brumskine comme de véritables porte-flambeaux de la paix et de l'État de droit.



# Français

## Weah plaide pour des

qui doit être admirée et célébrée.

« Elle marque une célébration symbolique de 20 ans de paix ininterrompue depuis la signature de l'Accord de paix global d'Accra en 2003 », a déclaré M. Weah.

« Nous avons maintenant connu cinq années de paix soutenue et ininterrompue depuis que j'ai pris mes fonctions de président du Libéria le 22 janvier 2018. »

Il a déclaré que « le Libéria fournit désormais des troupes dans le cadre des forces de maintien de la paix des Nations Unies dans plusieurs pays d'Afrique. Au lieu d'exiger des soldats de la paix qu'ils maintiennent la paix dans notre pays ».

Le président Weah a indiqué que les Libériens, pendant des années, ont travaillé positivement pour consolider la paix. Ils doivent rejeter et condamner ceux qui chercheront à ramener le pays vers les jours sombres.

« Je suis fier de ce que nous avons accompli en tant que nation, et également heureux que nous ayons maximisé le soutien externe que nous avons reçu au cours de notre parcours vers ce niveau », a-t-il déclaré.

Selon lui, si les prochaines élections se déroulent de manière pacifique et crédible, ce sera la preuve du renforcement et de la mise en valeur des références démocratiques du Libéria, de sa résilience et de son engagement sans relâche à défendre les principes de la démocratie.

Il a félicité les leaders politiques et leurs partis

d'avoir signé la deuxième Déclaration de Farmington River.

Le président Weah estime que si les prochaines élections sont pacifiques, le Libéria sera reconnu comme une nation démocratique.

« Avec un exercice démocratique garanti et réussi, nous démontrerons davantage notre volonté de paix, de sécurité, de stabilité et de développement durables », a-t-il ajouté.

« Cette signature est un geste qui indique en outre que nous, dirigeants de partis politiques, envoyons un signal fort à nos partisans, sympathisants et supporters, ainsi qu'au monde entier », a-t-il déclaré.

Il a déclaré que cela démontrerait leur engagement indéfectible et leur préparation à organiser des élections démocratiques pacifiques, libres, équitables, transparentes, inclusives et crédibles le 10 octobre de cette année.

Il a ajouté que cela démontre leur disposition à accepter la volonté du peuple libérien telle qu'elle sera exprimée à travers les urnes.

Au moins 27 partis politiques sur 31 ont signé l'instrument. La cérémonie a été organisée sous les auspices de la Commission électorale nationale (NEC) du Libéria, de la Communauté économique des États de l'Afrique de l'Ouest (CEDEAO) et des Nations Unies (ONU).

L'ONU et la CEDEAO ont signé l'accord en tant que témoins. Au nom des Nations Unies, Mme Giovane Biha, Représentante spéciale adjointe du Secrétaire général et Chef par intérim du Bureau des Nations Unies pour l'Afrique de l'Ouest et le Sahel (UNOWAS) a signé l'accord. Dr. Omar Alieu Touray, Président de la Commission de la CEDEAO, a signé au nom de la CEDEAO.

## Mali : Kidal sous tension après

d'intimidation à la veille du onzième anniversaire, ce jeudi, de la proclamation d'indépendance de l'Azawad. Un rassemblement est prévu à Kidal à cette occasion à 13 heures. « Ils ont tenté d'intimider les populations pour qu'elles ne participent pas, estime un cadre de la CMA, mais cela ne marchera pas. »

La célébration de l'anniversaire de la proclamation d'indépendance de l'Azawad, en 2012, en dépit de la signature d'un accord de paix en 2015, est chaque

année perçue comme une provocation à Bamako.

« Aucune action néfaste »

En début de semaine, le porte-parole de l'armée malienne, le colonel Souleymane Dembélé, assurait, en réponse à des rumeurs sur les réseaux sociaux, qu'« aucune action néfaste ne serait entreprise à l'égard de Kidal », que les relations entre l'armée et les groupes armés signataires s'inscrivaient bien dans le cadre de l'accord de paix, et que l'armée n'avait pour cible que les groupes terroristes.

Des propos en droite ligne de la position officielle du gouvernement malien de transition.

## Abidjan | Ouverture de la 14e Conférence des présidents d'Assemblées et de Sections de la région Afrique de l'APF, avec la participation du Maroc



Les travaux de la 14ème Conférence des présidents d'Assemblées et de Sections de la région Afrique de l'Assemblée parlementaire Francophone (APF), se sont ouverts, lundi à Abidjan, en Côte d'Ivoire, avec la participation d'une délégation marocaine de haut niveau.

La délégation marocaine, conduite par le vice-président de la Chambre des Représentants, M. Hassan Benomar, comprend Mohamed Ghat, président du groupe du Rassemblement national des indépendants (RNI), Ouallal Hossein du groupe du Rassemblement National des Indépendants, Mme Latifa Lablih, présidente de la Commission du contrôle des finances publiques et membre du groupe Authenticité et Modernité (PAM), et Chafik Hachim-Amine, du groupe istiqlalien de l'unité et de l'égalitarisme.

Cet important événement international, qui se tient les 3 et 4 avril, constitue une occasion pour les représentants des parlements membres de se rencontrer, de se concerter, d'échanger et d'ouvrir de larges horizons de dialogue dans le but de renforcer les relations et les efforts des parlements dans l'espace francophone.

Plusieurs questions centrales seront abordées et débattues par les participants à cette 14ème Conférence, notamment la situation politique et sociale dans les pays francophones d'Afrique et les crises politiques dans certains pays comme le

Burkina Faso, la Guinée, le Mali, le Tchad, et la Tunisie.

D'autres thèmes seront aussi au menu des discussions, à savoir « Les défis de la gouvernance démocratique et de la sécurité en Afrique francophone », « La sécurité alimentaire à l'épreuve des crises politiques, sociales et économiques », et « La protection des écosystèmes forestiers et la lutte contre désertification en Afrique : réflexions sur les politiques publiques et les initiatives parlementaires des dix dernières années ».

L'ordre du jour comprend également des axes liés aux missions de l'Assemblée parlementaire de la Francophonie, notamment en ce qui concerne la révision des statuts, la présentation des travaux du comité sur la mise en place d'un fonds de solidarité de la région Afrique de l'Assemblée parlementaire de la Francophonie. La conférence abordera de même le phénomène de l'absence prolongée de certaines sections africaines aux travaux des instances de l'APF, et fixera le lieu et la date de la 15ème Conférence des présidents d'Assemblées et de Sections. En marge des travaux de la 14ème Conférence, qui seront sanctionnés par l'adoption du communiqué final, la délégation marocaine aura des entretiens avec d'autres délégations présentes dans l'objectif de renforcer la coopération parlementaire bilatérale et multilatérale.

## Le président de la Commission de la CEDEAO a assisté à la signature de la Déclaration de Farmington

Le Président de la Commission de la CEDEAO, S.E. Le Dr Omar Alieu Touray, était au Libéria pour assister à la signature de la Déclaration révisée de Farmington River 2023 le 4 avril 2023. La Déclaration révisée de Farmington River est un engagement des partis politiques à la non-violence et aux moyens judiciaires pour résoudre les conflits électoraux survenant avant et après les élections. Le Libéria devrait organiser des élections présidentielles et législatives en octobre de cette année.

Pendant son séjour au Libéria, le Président Touray a rencontré le Président George Manneh Weah et Mme Giovane Biha, Représentante spéciale adjointe du Secrétaire général et Chef par intérim du Bureau des Nations Unies en Afrique de l'Ouest et au Sahel.

Dans sa déclaration lors de la cérémonie de signature, le Président de la Commission de la CEDEAO a félicité le Gouvernement et le peuple libériens pour leurs efforts inlassables en faveur de la



consolidation de la paix et du développement, tout en reconnaissant le généreux soutien des partenaires internationaux.

S'adressant aux partis politiques, il les a exhortés à adhérer au code de conduite qui guide les partis politiques et leurs partisans. Il a poursuivi en rappelant à l'assemblée la position de la CEDEAO sur la tolérance zéro pour la violence et que les auteurs seront identifiés et punis. Les médias ont été encouragés à s'abstenir d'utiliser leurs plateformes pour la désinformation, les fausses nouvelles et la rhétorique incendiaire qui pourraient faire dérailler la paix au Libéria. Le président a en outre rassuré le Libéria sur le soutien continu de la CEDEAO au processus électoral pour sauvegarder l'intégrité des élections.

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## ARTICLE

## ARTICLE

# Forest and Carbon Harvesting: The Case of Liberia

By S. Karweaye

The investigation said this token fine was part of a pattern of negligence by the FDA's Weah-appointed director, Mike Doryen, and other senior personnel at the forestry agency, who were described as having committed "serious breaches of Liberian law" in their response to the case. According to the justice ministry investigation, SGS, an independent auditing group that holds an EU-funded contract to monitor Liberia's timber trade, expressed concern over the minimal fine in a letter to the FDA. The agency then imposed an additional \$100,000 fine on Renaissance – still far more lenient than Liberian forestry laws mandated. Based on the total value of the timber and the severity of the violation, the panel that carried out the investigation said the logs should have been seized and Renaissance should have paid a fine of around \$1.75 million.

The investigating panel said there was "sufficient evidence to conclude that illegal logging on a significant scale" had been carried out by Renaissance. It recommended the logs be confiscated and that Weah convene a special presidential committee to further examine the government's response to the case. Neither recommendation was implemented by President Weah.

According to Liberia's renowned newspaper, Daily Observer, in January 2023, Renaissance Group Incorporated won a controversial lawsuit in Liberia, when a court ordered forestry officials to allow a shipment of illegally harvested ekki logs to be exported. Liberian environmental groups say the ruling is emblematic of a breakdown of the laws regulating the country's logging sector under the current president, George Weah, and exposes its rainforests to serious threat. In March 2023, the paper revealed "kewa Group of companies, a Nigerian firm operating in Margibi and Grand Bassa County at the time, forged another company's document to acquire a new logging contract."

In 2007, a British company Carbon Harvesting Corporation (CHC) approached the Government of Liberia to negotiate the allocation of a 400,000-hectare forest carbon concession - a fifth of Liberia's rainforest- to sell carbon credits to clients who want to offset their carbon emissions. A Global Witness investigation of the financial, social, and environmental risks involved in the proposed deal revealed regular payments were made to Liberian government officials and a politician via a middleman. According to Global Witness, the British company's proposal to rent out one-fifth of Liberia's forests for carbon offsetting could have bankrupted the impoverished Liberian state because under the contract, if Liberia's forests had failed to deliver the full estimated number of carbon credits, based on a minimum target price of around \$13.5 per tonne of CO<sub>2</sub>, it could have been liable to make up the difference to a maximum of \$2.2bn.

In June of 2010, President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf appointed a three-man committee headed by Counsellor Nabelee Warner to probe a proposed Carbon Concession agreement between the Forestry Development Authority or FDA and a UK-based company, Carbon Harvesting Corporation. The appointment of the committee was about a report released by Global Witness concerning the existence of a carbon concession agreement between the Liberian government represented by the Forestry Development Authority and the UK-based CHC covering one-fifth of Liberia's forests.

According to the Committee's report investigating the fraud, corruption, misinformation, and illicit nature of the deal, several people were involved in bribery and corruption regarding the CHC contract, but most of them carefully concealed their activities making direct evidence hard to obtain. It was found by the investigating panel committee that not only did the FDA board deliberately fast-track the deal, provide misleading information, and

evidenced in the Global Witness investigation, carbon harvesting is widely expected to reward political and commercial elites with billions of dollars of public money, with little or nothing reaching the communities that will be expected to protect the forests. In Liberia, where 1.5 million live and depend on forests, potential carbon harvesting projects might be in limbo because much of Liberia's forests have never been surveyed, and land ownership is fiercely disputed. Local communities are supposed to earn a share of carbon credit sales to pay for better health, education, and alternative livelihoods, but is that possible in Liberia?

In Malaysia, a controversial carbon harvesting deal in Malaysian Borneo is worth an estimated \$80 billion. The Nature Conservation Agreement (NCA) ostensibly protects 2 million hectares (4.9 million acres) of rainforest in the state of Sabah from logging for the next 100 years by selling the carbon stored in the trees, plants, soil, and rivers to commercial polluters looking to offset their emissions. But a months-long investigation by Al Jazeera showed that the NCA was hammered out in secrecy, and with what activists and Indigenous leaders said was no due diligence or consultation with landowners. Al Jazeera's investigation also showed that a Singaporean shell company with no obvious experience in carbon trading stood to earn up to \$23bn from the deal.

Liberia can learn from her own experience as well as experiences from Papua New Guinea, Malaysia and other countries. The carbon harvesting market is a remarkable opportunity to generate billions for the Liberian economy' obligations for climate finance whilst enhancing energy access, generating jobs, safeguarding biodiversity, and promoting climate action. Liberia with its vast forest can produce millions of carbon credits annually by 2030 by exploiting the predicted rise in carbon trading activity. This level of production would support millions of jobs and bring in billions in revenue.

Efforts to tackle deforestation and forest degradation have still to prove effective. While efforts to halt deforestation in place, persistent extraction of logs driven by expanding demand makes it difficult to control timber harvesting. With the Government of Liberia (GOL) and the newly founded United Arab Emirate (UAE) -based entity, Blue Carbon MOU, Liberia should begin to consider establishing a clear carbon tax policy as it lays the foundation for carbon credits to grow into a significant industry, however, this may be difficult given the poor electricity and infrastructural deficit in the country. Nonetheless, a clear carbon tax framework will help the nation raise revenue to fund necessary climate change initiatives. Also, If Liberia seeks to improve the environment, policies should be put in place to reduce the level of corruption. We are watching!

skim over the proposal by CHC, but there existed a 'criminal conspiracy' to violate various Liberian national laws for profit.

There's a great worldwide scramble going on to find forest lands that would qualify for carbon harvesting to gain access to the \$16 trillion global carbon market.

In March 2023, Liberia renowned and leading newspaper, the Daily Observer revealed "kewa Group of companies, a Nigerian firm operating in Margibi and Grand Bassa County at the time, forged another company's document to acquire a new logging contract."

Papua New Guinea and Malaysia

There are signs that much carbon harvesting is already leading to social conflict, possible fraud, and worsening land disputes. In 2009, the director of climate change in Papua New Guinea was suspended following allegations that unofficial carbon credits worth \$100m were issued from 39 potential Redd projects by an Australian-based carbon company. Landowners claimed they had been forced to sign over the rights to their forests by so-called carbon harvesters. Like Liberia, Papua New Guinea has a history of rampant corruption and illegal logging. In April 2022, the country imposed a moratorium on new voluntary carbon credit schemes to give the government time to create a regulatory framework for future and existing deals.

Carbon harvesting has the potential to be fantastic for forest communities in Liberia, but also to go wrong. As





# PYJ alleges exclusion in VP talks

By Lincoln G. Peters

Sources say Nimba County Senator Prince Y. Johnson is thinking of re-uniting with the ruling Coalition for Democratic Change (CDC) because is excluded from Amb. Joseph Nyumah Boakai's

the party and instruct Nimbaians not to vote him when he is handpicked as running mate to Amb. Boakai in the upcoming presidential and legislative elections. Mr. Boakai, Liberia's former vice president, is yet to declare his running mate for the

source quoted Senator Johnson as saying. "I also told Amb. Boakai about some documents and conditions that he needs to commit himself [to]. However, he has not done that. But, disappointingly, Amb. Boakai and Koung are having

# Whapoe condemns Farmington Declaration

By Lincoln G. Peters

Opposition Vision for Liberia Transformation Party (VOLT) political leader Dr. Jeremiah Z. Whapoe has described the Farmington River Declaration signed by twenty seven political parties as completely ludicrous and waste of time.

registration without demarcating constituencies as the Constitution requires after conducting a national census.

"It's not the future aggrieved opposition that should be signing peace agreement, rather it should be the government alone because they control the military, police and election."

"The peace [is] in their hands, if they decide to do the right thing, we will have a peaceful society. Nigeria had election and did not sign that. It's the individual rights of people to express their dissatisfaction," Dr. Whapoe contended.

Addressing a press conference Thursday, 6 April 2023 at his party head office on the Old Road, he said the Government of Liberia has every right to defend and protect the state. He argued that it includes providing a fair, transparent, and peaceful election. Whapoe believes that bringing opposition political parties to sign commitment for a peaceful, and transparent election is ludicrous.

He indicated that Liberians, including Montserrado County District #10 Representative Yekeh Kulbah have complained about the election breaches by the President and the National Election Commission did not do anything about it. He added that ECOWAS did not step in.

"I don't know why political parties have to sign declaration for peace and transparent election. I think that is [completely] ludicrous and waste of time," he said. "It's a waste of time because the

"Now, they are not holding the government responsible, but they want to hold the opposition responsible for what they are not envisaging," he added. "They want



Former VP Boakai | Senator Jeremiah Koung | Sen. Prince Johnson

negotiation to pick Jeremiah Koung as running mate.

"I will tell the people of Nimba not to vote him if he continues what he is doing. We had discussion and he is now deviating from the conversion for a position that he has not obtained. This is complete disrespect, not just to me, the party, but to the people of Nimba," a source quotes Johnson as saying.

It is reported that Senator Johnson wants to know what will be the benefit of Nimba County, MDR and his personal benefit.

While Senator Johnson is said to be agitating, sources say he has refused to disclose what exactly are the demands that he wants Amb. Boakai to commit to. Koung recently succeeded Johnson as political leader of the Movement for Democracy and Reconstruction (MDR), and the latter appeared to have engineered the push for Boakai to pick his kinsman as running mate.

However, Senator Johnson he is said to have threatened to expel Senator Koung from

October 2023 presidential and legislative elections, but Koung and Grand Bassa County Senator Nyoblee Karnga-Lawrence are top candidates for the slot.

Our sources have hinted that Senators Koung and Johnson are now in a beef following a serious disagreement that allegedly aroused from the latter's feeling of exclusion from ongoing negotiations with Amb. Boakai.

According to our sources, the sour relationship between the two Nimba leaders has transcended to their followers who are now alleged to see each others as rivals. Some insiders are concerned that this might be a great deal against the opposition Unity Party (UP) efforts to form a unity ticket that has a strong root in a vote-rich county like Nimba.

There are allegations that Koung and Boakai are now holding talks unilaterally without Johnson's involvement.

"Before Amb. Boakai could decide on Senator Jeremiah Koung, I had negotiation with him here and we also concluded the consultation in Ghana," a

conversation and discussions without my involvement," the source alleged further. Senator Johnson is alleged to make a claim that he is being excluded from every and all conversation because Amb. Boakai does not want to do what he had asked him to do.

"What I am hearing is that Senator Koung has been told by Amb. Boakai and other UP partisans to forget about me and the entire party and contest with Amb. Boakai since I am giving [him] hard time. That's why they have excluded me," Johnson is reported as saying. He claimed that the Unity Party has emboldened Koung with the believe that he has the crowd and the number, and that Johnson cannot take that from him. "However, I like to warn him that they are deceiving [him] because I make him and I can break him," the source quoted Senator Johnson. "He was told that he has the crowd, but he should also be informed that I made him and it takes me nothing to break him," Sources have further quoted Senator Johnson.

# Starts from page 6 'No soldier will

has demonstrated the change in the lives of citizens," Morlu said. He continued that this change is visible - citing roads, tuition-free policies, loans, and children's play ground, among others.

"You can't sustain development if you're not a registered voter; many things will happen if any CDCian fails to get registered."

He warned that party officials, executives and

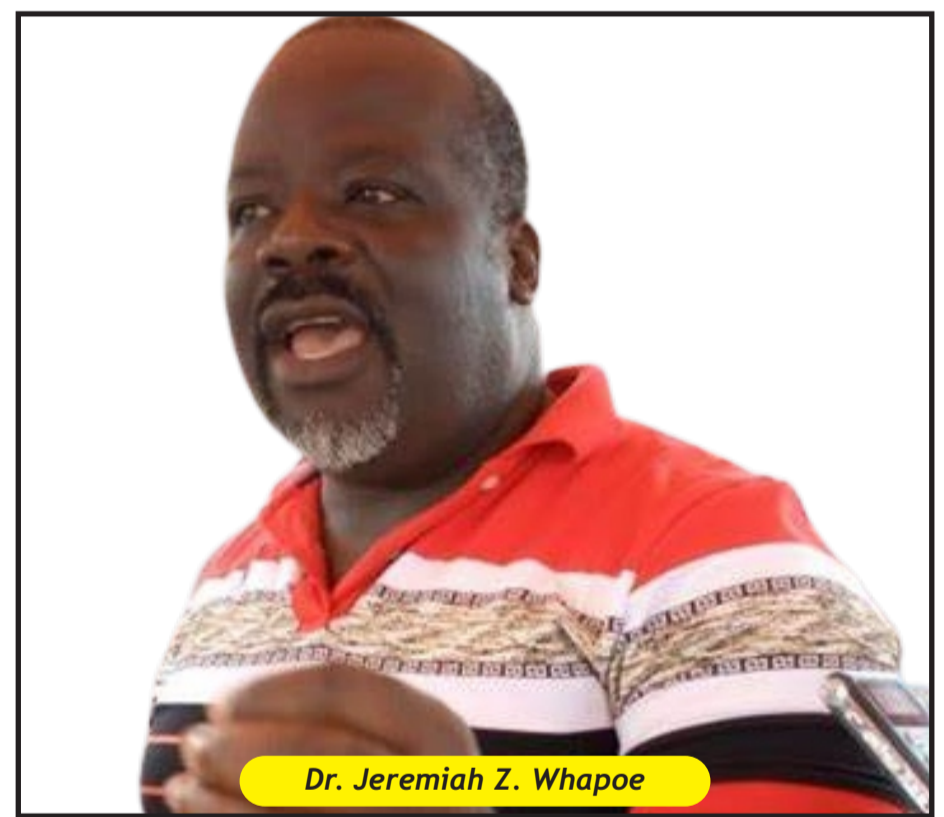
heads of auxiliary groups who may not display voter registration cards will be subjected to many actions. Morlu stated that if CDCians can't get registered, then they can't give President Weah a first-round victory.

At the same time, Morlu has thrown jabs at the opposition, accusing them of not carrying out awareness up to now, but they are running to the Supreme Court to halt the process.

"The good thing about this

election, we don't have any opposition. The weak group of people calling themselves opposition are fragmented, visionless, and leaderless. And we must take advantage of this situation," he said.

Meanwhile, Chairman Morlu has called on the National Elections Commission (NEC) and its workers to stop denying people who can't speak English fluently. "We believe that nobody should be turned down from registering because of ascent," he said.



Dr. Jeremiah Z. Whapoe

opposition political parties that signed are not the ones that [are] in control of the security of the state, guns, police and the military in the country," he added.

The opposition leader stated that it sounded foolish to say that opposition parties should sign commitment for peaceful and transparent election. He indicated that the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) should hold the government responsible. He stated that the government has all it takes constitutionally to protect the country and provide free, fair, and transparent election. Dr. Whapoe accused the government of violating the Election Law, saying it has engaged in pre-campaign activities.

He further accused the government of conducting voter

us to accept any result that's why they are doing that so we can say for the sake of peace. I am not preaching violence, but I am preaching the protection of the Constitution and the Elections Law," the VOLT political leader lamented.

He claimed that there is no history in Liberia that the opposition political parties have ever instigated and created mayhem in the country. Whapoe noted that over the past time, they have witnessed opposition political parties taking government to court, using the judiciary as a point to address their grievances.

"Election matter was taken to court by opposition political parties and it was manhandled by the judiciary. We saw it in 2017, Cllr. Charles W. Brumskine and many more," he said.



## I'm ready to bring changes

### -Cummings vows

By Thomas Domah,  
Nimba County

The Standard Bearer of the opposition Alternative National Congress (ANC) Mr.

ministers, including his own salary will be public to demonstrate transparency and accountability. The Liberian presidential hopeful made the commitment recently in

that Liberia is rich, but previous national leaders neglected the well-being of the people.

I'm ready to bring the changes - Justice, peace, unity and development, including road network to enable farmers bring their crops to market. During the visit, Nimbaians complained about insecurity, lack of jobs, and poor living conditions, among others.

Meanwhile, the CPP leader openly warns Nimbaians who want to contest for legislative seats on the CPP tickets to do away with corruptions. "If you win the representative and senatorial positions, don't accept bribes in the House, but rather do things that will impact your district and country", he urges.

Some representative aspirants from the county, including Journalist Nya G. Flomo welcomed Mr. Cummings' urge and calls on Nimbaians not to elect corrupt people in power. Journalist Flomo laments that corruption has denied citizens basic services, including better education, health, among others. *Editing by Jonathan Browne*



ANC leader Mr. Cummings

Alexander B. Cummings promises to bring much desire changes to Liberia, if elected President in October.

Mr. Cummings also vows to combat corruption and help improve living conditions of Liberians, including Nimbaians, who he notes, continue to complain of bad leadership.

He says under an ANC/ CPP leadership salaries of cabinet

electoral district#8, Nimba County, while touring several towns and villages when citizens gathered in huge number and endorsed his bid for the Presidency to replace incumbent President Weah.

He promised to empower farmers, rural women, youth and improve agricultural, health, roads, education, amongst others.

The CPP leader observes

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