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These are indicative rates based on results of daily surveys of foreign exchange market in Monrovia and selected cities of Liberia. These rates are collected from the Central bank, commercial banks, parallel market and the license forex bureaux. The rates are not set by the Central Bank of Liberia.
Source: Research, Policy and Planning Department, CBL.

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Continental News

One village's search for its last earthquake victim

In the village of Ouirgane in the Atlas Mountains, residents gather on piles of debris around the home of a mother and daughter buried underneath. Like many mountain communities, Ouirgane suffered major losses in the earthquake that struck Morocco on Friday

surrounded by piles of rubble, and small traces of lives now destroyed: a teapot, a child's Disney rucksack, a floral scarf. Crowds gather around the building and pray for good news, as rescue workers use a sniffer dog to search for signs of life. Residents tell us they will not leave until Fatima and Hajar are

after spending hours trapped in the rubble. She says Fatima and Hajar, 40 and 17, had the "same nature", describing them as "peaceful" people. "Fatima never argued with anyone, or had problems with anyone," she tells me. "Hajar would keep to herself. She was shy. She was studying and was among the top students."

But hopes of finding them alive are slim, and fade throughout the day. In the late afternoon, a body is found.

Rescue workers move slowly and carefully as they take the body out of the rubble and onto an orange stretcher, covering it with blankets. It is Hajar, they say.

They lift the stretcher and carry it through the streets towards a clearing in front of the local cemetery. The crowds follow solemnly behind. After the body is washed, the stretcher is placed on the ground, and the men file in rows behind it. And then they pray. After the burial, the crowds file back to the building, waiting for news on Fatima.

No one we speak to now has any hope of finding her alive, but they say it is important that her body is recovered. "Everyone underground here has been brought out - alive or dead. Fatima is the only one left," one man says.



A rescue team carries the body of an earthquake victim

night. Buildings have been destroyed and most residents are now either sleeping in tents or have left.

Police and rescue workers tell us more than 30 people died here. The cemetery is dotted with new graves covered in branches. For now, everyone is focused on the two missing women: Fatima and Hajar. They lived on the ground floor of a three-storey building in the centre of the village. It now tilts to one side and is

found, dead or alive. "In our culture, we eat from the same plate. We share food and we share plates. We're a family," one man says, as a crowd around him nod in agreement. "They're our sisters," says another.

Among the crowd is Fatima's sister-in-law Khadija, who lived in the top two floors of the building. She was in Marrakesh when the earthquake struck. She tells us that Fatima's husband was pulled from the debris but later died, while her young son is in hospital

Queen of African horror: I am terrified of ghosts

Known to her fans as the "Queen of African Horror", British-Nigerian author Nuzo Onoh says her prestigious literary prize is a signal that African folk horror has finally become an internationally recognised genre. "When I started writing, if you googled 'African horror', what you would get was Aids, war, famine. But now you'll get books, films. They are part of the literary genre pool," she tells the BBC's Focus on Africa.

Onoh formally received the Bram Stoker Lifetime Achievement Award from the Horror Writers Association (HWA) in June. It described her as "a pioneer of the African horror literary genre [whose] writing showcases both the beauty and the horrific in the African culture". Previous winners of the award include household names in horror fiction like Stephen King, Anne

Rice and British actor Christopher Lee, famous for playing Dracula in numerous films. Born in Enugu in south-eastern Nigeria, Onoh comes from the Igbo community.

Her most recent book, *A Dance for the Dead*, draws heavily from Igbo culture and traditions.

It follows the journey to redemption of character Diké, first son of the fictional king of Ukari and

heir to the throne. Diké is tragically cast as an "Osu" - an outcast - after he is found in mysterious circumstances within the sacred shrine of the village god. In Igbo tradition, Osus were people who ran into the shrines of deities to seek protection from threats from other community members. Anyone who ran into



Flooded Libyan city looks 'like a tsunami hit it'

The death toll from floods in Libya in one city alone stands at more than 1,500, a minister who visited the eastern port of Derna has told the BBC. "I was shocked by what I saw, it's like a tsunami," Hisham Chkiouat, from the eastern-based government, said. Much of Derna, which is home to about 100,000 people, is under water after two dams and four bridges collapsed. Up to 10,000 people are recorded to be missing after the flooding as a result of Storm Daniel, the Red Crescent says. The eastern cities of Benghazi, Soussa and Al-Marj have also been affected by the storm, which hit on Sunday. Mr Chkiouat, the aviation minister and part of the eastern government's emergency response committee, told BBC Newshour that the collapse of one of the dams to the south of Derna had dragged large parts

survived along with his wife and small daughter, told the Reuters news agency: "At first we just thought it was heavy rain but at midnight we heard a huge explosion and it was the dam bursting." Libyan journalist Noura Eljerbi, based in Tunisia, told the BBC she only found out that around 35 of her relatives who all lived in the same apartment block in Derna were still alive after reaching out to a local rescue team. "They checked, the house has been destroyed but my family managed to get out before things got worse. They are safe now," she says, though she is still waiting to talk to them directly. Mr Chkiouat had told Reuters earlier that a quarter of the city had disappeared. Tamer Ramadan, head of the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) in Libya, has told reporters the death toll is likely to be "huge". Speaking via video link from neighbouring Tunisia, he said: "Our teams on the



Floods tear through Libyan city of Derna

of the city into the sea.

"A massive neighbourhood has been destroyed - there is a large number of victims, which is increasing each hour.

"Currently 1,500 dead. More than 2,000 missing. We don't have accurate figures but it's a calamity," he said, adding that "the dam that collapsed hasn't been maintained for a while". Ahead of the storm, the authorities in Derna had imposed an overnight curfew on Sunday ordering people not to leave their houses as part of precautionary measures.

Water engineering experts have told the BBC it is likely that the upper dam, around 12km (eight miles) from the city, failed first - its water sweeping down the river valley towards the second dam, which is estimated to be about one kilometre from the low-lying part of Derna, where neighbourhoods were inundated. Raja Sassi, who

ground are still doing their assessment... we don't have a definite number right now. The number of missing people is hitting 10,000 persons so far." BBC Weather says Bayda, a town around 165km west of Derna, recorded 414mm of rain in 24 hours during Storm Daniel. According to climate-data.org, September is usually a dry month in north-eastern Libya and the recent downpour accounts for 77% of Bayda's average annual total. Alongside areas in the east, the western city of Misrata was among those hit by the floods.

Libya has been in political chaos since long-serving ruler Col Muammar Gaddafi was overthrown and killed in 2011 - leaving the oil-rich nation effectively split with an interim, internationally recognised government operating from the capital, Tripoli, and another one in the east. According to Libyan journalist Abdulkader Assad, this is hampering rescue efforts as the various authorities are not able to respond with agility

EDITORIAL

Welcoming the EU Election Observers Mission to Liberia

NEWS THAT THE European Union has deployed 20 Election Observers Mission across Liberia, ahead of the October 10th Presidential Legislative Elections, is both welcoming and encouraging.

THESE ELECTIONS MARK a significant milestone in the consolidation of Liberia's democracy, Deputy Chief Observer, Jarek Domanski, who has been in the country since the end of August, is quoted as saying.

ACCORDING TO A press release, the Mission's primary focus will be on monitoring electoral preparations and campaign activities in all of Liberia's 15 counties.

DEPUTY CHIEF OBSERVER Domanski said group of experts, including specialists in election procedures, politics, law, campaign finance, media, social media, and data analysis are in the country to carry out such mission.

THE NEWS SHOULD be welcomed by all Liberians that desire a peaceful election and peace for Liberia.

The presence of international observers to monitor the polls will also deter would-be troublemakers that are planning to disrupt the process and revert Liberia to chaos.

IT INDICATES THAT the people of Liberia are not alone in the quest to remain on the path of transparent elections and sustaining the democratic process.

AS FOREIGN OBSERVERS troop into the country, it behooves us as Liberians to set the right image for ourselves that we are ready to keep the nation peaceful and stable.

ELECTIONS ARE FOR just a day, but after the polls and results start trickling in, it will be the crucial time for all sides to exercise high degree of maturity and tolerance until a winner is declared by the National Elections Commission.

AS CHIEF OBSERVER Andreas Schieder revealed, the EU Election Observer Mission is here at the invitation of the Government of Liberia, which should indicate that the government is committed to conducting free, fair and transparent elections.

THEREFORE, THE ONUS is on all Liberians to work towards ensuring that polls are not just free, fair, and transparent, but violence-free for the benefit of both the current generation and generations to come. We believe strongly that doing so would leave behind a good footprint for posterity to come.

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COMMENTARY

By Simon Johnson

Great Power Competition Today

WASHINGTON, DC - The recent BRICS summit in South Africa marks the start of a new phase of Great Power competition. At the apparent urging of China, the BRICS group (which also includes Brazil, Russia, India, and South Africa) invited six other countries to join: Argentina, Egypt, Ethiopia, Iran, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates. By some measures, the economic output of this expanded group will rival that of the G7 (the major developed countries: the United States, Canada, Japan, the United Kingdom, France, Germany, and Italy).

According to public statements by Russian President Vladimir Putin and, more importantly, by Chinese President Xi Jinping, the goal is to build a group that can stand up to Western influence and create the foundation for an alternative international order, with less reliance on the US dollar.

This effort will no doubt gain greater attention in the coming year, especially when the expanded membership meets for the first time in October 2024 (in Kazan, Russia). But BRICS+ is unlikely to reshape the world, for three reasons.

First, the extent of common interest among its members should not be exaggerated. India has plenty of reasons (based on a great deal of recent history) not to want China to become too powerful. And any group that includes oil and gas producers (Brazil, Russia, Iran, Saudi Arabia, and the UAE) and energy importers has a fundamental fault line. For example, South Africa, where energy shortages (and rolling power cuts) are having serious negative effects on the economy, has no interest in paying more for energy; but selling oil to the world is what keeps the oil and gas producers' public finances afloat.

Second, the idea of replacing the dollar with other currencies for trade and for financial transactions has been around for decades. The problem is that you cannot replace something with nothing. If the alternative involves the Chinese renminbi, it will require putting a great deal of faith in the Chinese economy, which currently looks more than a little shaky. When the going gets tough, would the Chinese authorities really allow foreigners to sell their renminbi holdings without restriction?

Third, any alliance with Russia is obviously fraught with dangers at this point. Russia's leadership looks unstable and unpredictable. Rather than backing down from his war of aggression against Ukraine, Putin seems determined to continue disrupting global energy markets (bad for energy importers) and grain markets (very bad for countries such as Egypt).

Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine has been a disaster for both countries, but Putin is the type of dictator who cannot admit a mistake. The current cascade of coups across Africa reminds us (and him) how such regimes end.

For centuries, Great Power competition was based on formal empire (ruling other countries) and exercising de facto control through military means, bribery, and

unequal trading relationships. From the early 1700s until the 1940s, the British Empire led the world with both types of machinations, but other European countries also had their spheres of influence.

The global system changed after World War II, because the United States took over as the leading Western industrial power, determined to replace formal empire with much more equal trading relationships. To be sure, there continue to be plenty of complaints about the fairness of that system. But Western Europe did well, and countries such as Japan, Singapore, South Korea, and (in recent decades) China prospered under a relatively open international trading system that encouraged exports of manufactured goods from lower-wage countries to high-income markets. The Soviet Union's alternative post-war bloc, based on military control over Eastern Europe, fell apart in 1989, two years before the demise of the Soviet Union itself.

The latest phase of Great Power competition, however, is much more about technology than it is about trade. In retrospect, this shift began during WWII, when the British shared key developments (particularly radar and early thinking about atomic weapons), and the Americans' Manhattan Project went further and faster than anyone could have imagined.

Digital computers, semiconductor chips, jet aircraft, life-saving drugs and vaccines, and the internet all came from the West (boosted significantly by US government investments).

In October 1957, the Soviet Union shocked the world by launching the first artificial satellite, Sputnik. But its rigid and repressive system could not sustain enough creativity or turn good ideas into products that people wanted (other than weapons).

Now China wants to challenge the West for leadership in new technology, with a view to tightening social control through a combination of artificial intelligence and surveillance. This, not the expanded BRICS, is the real potential threat to the West.

There is now an active bipartisan discussion in Washington, led by US Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer, regarding how much AI we want to develop and with what safeguards. This is healthy and will likely lead to better outcomes (although no doubt with imperfections in terms of consumer protection, alongside ongoing concerns about job losses).

In contrast, an open discussion about the technologies China wants to develop and how it directs innovation is not allowed in that country. As was true during the Cold War, a rigid and repressive system is bidding to lead the world in knowledge creation, application, and dissemination.

Will China succeed where the Soviet Union failed? As long as the West continues to nurture innovation - and manages that innovation responsibly - China is unlikely to win out. In this sense, the West controls its own destiny.

OP-ED

By Daniel Gros

The Real Problem with China's Economy

MILAN - China's ongoing economic slowdown has elicited a variety of explanations. But forecasts largely have one thing in common: while the short-term data are somewhat volatile - annual growth rates have been distorted by the legacy of the authorities' draconian zero-COVID policy - most observers expect Chinese GDP growth to continue trending downward. The International Monetary Fund, for example, expects growth to reach just 4.5% in 2024 and fall to 3% by the end of this decade - better than most advanced economies, but a far cry from the double-digit rates of a decade ago. Yet growth is only part of the story.

Of course, the focus on it is understandable. For decades, China has accounted for a significant share of global GDP growth. Moreover, the size of China's economy - a key determinant of its ability to continue expanding its military capabilities - will shape the evolution of the balance of power with its main rival, the United States. But growth is not the only - and probably not even the main - channel through which the Chinese economy affects the rest of the world. The balance of savings and investment also matters, perhaps even more.

One of the Chinese economy's distinguishing characteristics is its extraordinarily high investment and savings rates, which exceed 40% of GDP. This is double the level in the European Union and the US, and higher even than the rate in Asia's other high-savings countries, such as Japan and South Korea.

Investment - particularly in high-quality infrastructure - has been integral to maintaining China's rapid GDP growth. China built the world's largest high-speed rail network in record time. Today, even medium-size cities have metro lines, and China's numerous shiny new airports put the aging terminals seen in the US and Europe to shame.

But, as Harvard's Kenneth Rogoff has pointed out, such investment generates diminishing returns. This is best illustrated by the construction sector's woes. Over the last decade, so much housing has been built in China that about 40 square meters (430 square feet) per person already exists - about as much as in Germany or Japan. In other words, China has built the capital stock of a developed economy, effectively meeting housing demand - before reaching the associated income level.

This severely limits investment's potential to drive further increases in income. At this point, further housing construction would simply create more ghost cities - shiny, new, and empty. And because the additional housing stock - and infrastructure more broadly - has a long life span, this will not change significantly any time soon.

To be sure, China's government will probably be able to find new ways to support the construction sector, including by finding infrastructure projects that can at least be made to appear worthwhile - for example, in the poorer and rural inland provinces. But, overall, investment can be expected to decline gradually from now on.

Japan faced a similar problem a few decades ago. After its real-estate bubble burst in the late 1980s, the government attempted to lift the economy out of a severe downturn by channeling vast funds toward infrastructure investment. But most of the new roads led to nowhere, so after a few years of heavy spending, the government had to give up.

In China, the response to lower investment might seem simple: the Chinese could consume more. But recall that China's savings ratio is also extraordinarily high, and has remained so despite the authorities' efforts over the last decade to foster domestic consumption as a driver of growth. A significant rise is thus unlikely in the foreseeable future.

Beyond consumption, China could channel savings toward investment in renewable energy sources like solar and wind. But with such investment already approaching \$300 billion annually - far more than in the US or Europe - the ability of renewables to absorb Chinese savings is limited.

Amid declining investment, China's high savings spill out into the rest of world via current-account surpluses. In China, these surpluses are even larger than those of other countries with excess savings, like Germany or Japan, because of the magnitude of the potential excess and the sheer size of the economy.

If savings remain at their current level (over 40% of GDP), but investment falls to 30% of GDP - still a very high ratio - China would have to maintain a current-account surplus of ten percentage points of GDP to keep the economy in equilibrium. With China's GDP set to reach \$20 trillion soon, this would amount to nearly \$2 trillion. That is several times larger than the previous surpluses of Germany or Japan, and large enough to affect the global savings/investment balance.

One spillover effect of China's savings surplus - downward pressure on interest rates - would be relatively benign. But another, bigger danger looms: large Chinese current-account surpluses would fuel an already-accelerating trend toward protecting domestic industries against Chinese competition.

This does not have to be the case. With their investments in technologies like batteries, solar panels, and electric vehicles, Chinese exporters are on track to gain an ever-greater advantage in capital-intensive green industries. Europe and the US could welcome cheap green imports as a means of reducing the costs of their own climate policies. But this seems unlikely in today's climate of geopolitical confrontation. Instead, we can look forward to more protectionist policies, which will increase costs and do nothing to reduce Chinese savings.

OPINION

By Tse Yip Fai, Peter Singer

Self-Driving Cars and AI Ethics

PRINCETON/HONG KONG - Last month, California regulators allowed two companies that operate self-driving cars to accept paying customers in San Francisco. The first week did not go well. One car drove itself onto freshly poured concrete in a road construction zone with traffic cones and workers with flags. The car got stuck in the wet concrete, and the company will be paying to repave the road.

In a more serious incident, a passenger in a driverless car was injured in a collision with a fire truck. As a result, the operator agreed to halve the number of driverless vehicles it operated in San Francisco.

The decision to permit self-driving cars may usher in a new era of transportation, or it may prove to be a false dawn. Either way, the issues surrounding self-driving cars illustrate many of the ethical questions raised by the impact of artificial intelligence on everyday life.

A world in which most vehicles were fully autonomous would have many advantages. Most private cars spend a great deal of time idle. If everyone could call up an autonomous vehicle whenever required, there would be no need to own one's own car, thus saving resources. Moreover, by keeping traffic flowing more smoothly, the widespread use of driverless cars may also save fuel and time.

But the most important reason for eliminating human drivers is that it could also eliminate the human errors that cause so many traffic accidents, injuries, and deaths. (The US National Highway Traffic Safety Administration puts the death toll on US roads last year at 42,795.)

Elon Musk has said that developing fully autonomous vehicles is a moral obligation because it can bring about a "virtually accident-free future." But that future is still some distance away: to date, the Teslas that Musk's company makes have been involved in more than 700 crashes, with 17 fatalities, when operating on Autopilot, their driver assistance mode.

Both companies operating driverless cars in San Francisco claim that their cars are involved in fewer collisions, and especially fewer collisions involving injuries, than human drivers in a comparable driving environment. But the validity of such claims is contested, owing to doubts about the driving environments being compared.

Still, even if the latest generation of driverless vehicles is less safe than the average human driver, it could be argued that putting them onto city streets now is justified because doing so will save so many more lives in the long run. Once autonomous vehicles are perfected, we may even restrict human drivers to lower speeds, or prohibit them altogether, because the risk that they pose to other road users, relative to the safer option provided by driverless cars, becomes unacceptable.

Not surprisingly, opposition to "robo-taxis" has come from taxi drivers - a response familiar from other areas where AI threatens to put people out of work. By enhancing productivity, advocates say, AI will allow us to achieve a better work/life balance. But "us" will not include anyone who loses their job to AI, unless they are retrained for other work, and unless companies are required to pay their employees a living wage for a shorter work week. Will there be the political will to do that?

Looking further into the future, what if AI becomes so successful that few humans have jobs at all? Will we be able to develop new purposes that will replace the role of work in giving our lives meaning and fulfillment?

AI programming is likely to be another area for regulation. To return to the example of driverless vehicles, consumers in an unregulated market will seek cars that minimize the risk to themselves or their passengers, even if that significantly increases the risk to pedestrians. Yet if all cars were programmed this way, the number of people killed or injured by cars would be higher than if cars were programmed to follow risk-minimization strategies that are impartial between those inside the car and those outside it. Only regulation that requires such impartiality can prevent an outcome resembling the well-known "tragedy of the commons."

A more surprising issue raised by driverless cars is that they appear to be less reliable in detecting pedestrians with darker skin than those with lighter skin, and thus may hit disproportionately more dark-skinned pedestrians. One study (published in 2019 and using technology that was state-of-the-art in 2018) suggests that this was because the software was developed and trained in regions with more light-skinned pedestrians than dark-skinned ones. If that is the case, then once we are aware of such problems, they can and should be fixed.

One important but often overlooked ethical issue raised by autonomous vehicles is whether they should be programmed to avoid hitting animals, and if so, which ones. All vertebrates, and some invertebrates, are sentient beings, liable to suffer if hit but not killed instantly. Moreover, in many species, the loss of a mate will cause distress, or may lead to dependent offspring starving to death. How we should value the lives and interests of all sentient beings is a question that AI ethics needs to address.

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EU Election Observers venture out of Montserrado

By Kruah Thompson

All 20 European Union Long-Term Observers, who departed Montserrado County on September 9, 2023 for deployment across Liberia to

successfully completed their journey.

Reports indicate that the EU Long-Term Observers have commenced their initial meetings and are actively

encompasses professionals in election monitoring, politics, law, campaign finance, media, social media, and data analysis.

At the same time the President of the ECOWAS Commission, Dr Omar Alieu Touray, has approved the deployment of 15 Long-term Election Observers (LTOs) to monitor key stages in the electoral process leading up to Election Day on 10th October 2023.

The deployment is consistent with provisions of Articles 12 to 14 of the 2001 ECOWAS Supplementary Protocol on Democracy and Good Governance on assistance to Member States holding elections.

The Long-term Observation Mission (LTOM), headed by Mr. Serigne Mamadou KA, Ag. Head of the Electoral Assistance Division comprises experts in election administration, gender and civil society, constitutional law, security, and the media.

The LTO Mission will be in the country until 15th October 2023, to observe the electoral processes and also serve as an early warning mechanism for



monitor the October 10th elections have safely reached their respective assignment areas. As of September 12, 2023, the observers were deployed across all 15 counties of Liberia after enduring a challenging journey marked by difficult road conditions, particularly muddy roads near Zwedru, Grand Gedeh County. Nevertheless, they

engaged in monitoring the pre-electoral phase in the 15 counties.

On August 27, the EU Election Observer Mission, led by Deputy Chief Observer, Jarek Domański, arrived in Monrovia with a Core Team of 10 analysts to observe the electoral process.

The group of experts, as detailed in an EU press release,

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World Bank Liberia pledges support for Liberia's digital vision

By: Naneka Hoffman

The World Bank Liberia Country Manager, Georgia Wallen, says the Bank is strongly committed to support the development of digital economies through continent-level initiatives.

Ms. Wallen reveals the World Bank has adopted an ecosystem approach to support countries to achieve accelerated, inclusive and sustained growth through economy-wide digital transformation. Speaking Tuesday, September 12, 2023, during a diagnostic workshop in Monrovia she noted that this is not only about adopting technology, but rather creating an entire digital environment that is inclusive and sustainable to benefit all. She stresses that the global economy is undergoing profound transformation with digital technologies revolutionizing the way people live, work and interact. The World Bank Liberia Country Manager further discloses that the COVID-19 pandemic accelerated this transformation, stepping up technology adoption worldwide and across sectors, including education, health and finance. According to her, the digital economy has grown at a rapid pace, now accounting for

more than 15 percent of global Gross Domestic Products. Liberia's Minister of Posts and Telecommunications, Worlea-Saywah Dunah, explains that Liberia is beginning to build a digital economy. He says transactions with government ministries, agencies and private institutions will soon be done through digital economic system. Minister Dunah notes that study has shown that digitalized economy is considered the mean driver of economic growth. He says government's ministries and agencies have begun to digitalize their activities which is making services to people more efficient. He adds that the Ministry is making strife to ensure that Liberia's economy is

digitized.

The background informs that Liberia is at a critical juncture on the path to becoming a digital country, with many changes brought about by technological advancements. The digital workshop served as a platform for strategic discussions and planning to further Liberia's digital transformation, structured into two sessions, each of which addressed critical aspects of the journey - both present and future.

The World Bank completed the Liberia Digital Economy Country Diagnostic in 2020, building on the collaborative efforts of multiple stakeholders. Editing by Jonathan Browne



West Africa ICT Network joins ID4Africa's ID Day Campaign

By: Naneka Hoffman

Empowering West Africa through Secure Digital Identity West Africa ICT Action Network has joined ID4Africa's ID Day Campaign in Liberia. Regional Executive Director for WAICTANet, Peterking Quaye, says the West Africa ICT Action Network is proud to announce its partnership with ID4Africa as a coalition partner in the NGO & Civil Society category of the ID Day Campaign 2023. Mr. Quaye notes that the collaboration signifies a shared commitment to advancing secure and inclusive digital identity solutions across the West African region. According to him, the ID Day Campaign, led by ID4Africa, aims to promote the importance of legal identity and its profound impact on individuals, societies, and nations.

with ID4Africa extends beyond national boundaries to address these shared issues. Mr. Quaye says the West Africa ICT Action Network encourages all stakeholders to engage with this platform and contribute to dialogue surrounding digital identity. He continues that by aligning with ID4Africa's ID Day campaign, West Africa ICT Action Network (Liberia) aims to drive awareness, inspire action, and advocate for innovative digital identity solutions.

He details that through this partnership, both organizations envision a future where every individual in West Africa has access to a secure and recognized digital identity, enabling them to fully participate in the digital economy and society. To kick-start this partnership, the West Africa ICT Action Network (Liberia) has accessed resources such as "The Identity Day Campaign 2023" on commemorating ID Day in Liberia with other local partner outlets. The organization is also proud to showcase its support through the customizable Coalition Partner



Regional Executive Director Peterking Quaye

campaign, adding that the ID Day activity provides an interactive space for sharing messages of support.

badge, amplifying the campaign's message on various platforms.

However, he reveals that beyond Liberia's borders, West Africa faces similar identity challenges, with approximately 500 million people in the region lacking official identification, hindering progress on numerous fronts. The West Africa ICT Action Network's collaboration

"Our partnership with ID4Africa underlines our commitment to driving progress in the West African region through technology. Secure digital identity is a fundamental building block for socio-economic development, and we are proud to be part of this collective effort", he says. Editing by Jonathan Browne

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Audit is politicized

-Amara Konneh reflects on Sirleaf-era audits

By Bridgett Milton Ex-President Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf's former Finance Minister Amara Konneh says there was no audit report in the archives, challenging anyone to prove him wrong. Konneh said until the General Auditing Commission

important part of their government reconstruction. "The next thing you know audit reports became politicized and people became scared to either implement the Auditor General's recommendations to fix the problem in those institutions," said Mr. Konneh.

He recalled that the Ministry of Finance at that time was the only institution that submitted itself to an audit for all its years of service because it knew and understood the importance of audit.

The former Finance Minister recalled that during a cabinet meeting, former President Sirleaf told then Justice Minister Philip A.Z. Banks that there was too much noise about the audit report.

According to him, Mrs. Sirleaf had said she wanted to take action on them, but the Justice Ministry was not doing anything about it.

Mr. Konneh indicated that Mrs. Sirleaf complained that they were making her look bad, adding that she planned to do legislation to give power



Former Finance Min. Amara Konneh

the audit is not going anywhere because it has been politicized. Speaking at a lecture series organized by AME University recently, Mr. Konneh said he understands that people can make mistakes, but the audit will help the head of the institution to improve on their mistakes. Mr. Konneh noted that [before the Sirleaf era],

(GAC) was revamped and finance made available, no one could tell him that there was an audit record in the archives.

He stated that the first audit was done by then-Auditor General John Morlu. However, Mr. Konneh argued that audit was not part of Liberia's culture. But he said because of their commitment to good governance, it became an

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Make genuine commitment towards transformational change

-UN Resident Coordinator admonishes Government of Liberia

By Lincoln G. Peters

United Nations Resident Coordinator to Liberia, Ms. Christine Umutonia has admonished the Government of Liberia to make more genuine commitment towards transformational change across the country.

Speaking over the weekend in Monrovia, the UN envoy said Liberia has made modest progress that has improved its position in the global 2023 SDG Index. According to her, Liberia has made some structural and socio-economic reforms implemented by the government, and supported by partners. But, Ms. Umutonia noted that there is a need for Liberia to make more commitment toward transformational change. "There is a need for Liberia to make more commitment towards transformational change. Liberia has made some structural and social-economic reforms supported by its partners but, that is not enough. The government needs

to create a transformational change", she added.

Ms. Umutonia indicated that Liberia has committed to the SDGs domestication and developed the SDGs domestication Roadmap as well as the Pro-Poor Agenda for Prosperity and Development, which is a good start, but not enough to make progress in achieving the SDGs. Meanwhile, the UN diplomat commended the government and all Liberians for maintaining 20 years of

peace, and for committing to peaceful democratic elections in October 2023. According to her, commitment to maintaining the peace of Liberia is a fundamental building blocks for sustainable development. "The SDGs is about peace, the planet, people, prosperity, and partnership. It is about how we invest in human security so that people can have

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Ms. Christine Umutonia

GoL, UN-Liberia identify development Roadmap

-as Liberia prepares for SDGs Summit in New York

By Lincoln G. Peters

The Government of Liberia through the Ministry of Finance and Development Planning (MFDP) with support from the United Nations in Liberia has completed the national validation on commitment for acceleration and transformation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The two-day's validation symposium which lasted from September 7-8, seeks to prepare Liberia for the upcoming global SDGs Summit in New York this September. The consultation and validation exercise aims to prepare Liberia to report on progress, challenges, and opportunities in the implementation of its SDGs. The workshop also seeks to address SDGs priority areas including, benchmark on poverty and equality to propose, strengthening institutions to deliver the SDGs and means of implementation, monitoring and reporting. The workshop was held on the theme "Amplifying

mobilization, peace and development, investments, domestication, food security, building blocks, deliberate and intentional approaches and actions, budget and finance, ownership, accountability, monitoring and reporting, collaboration and partnership, reforms as well as social protection systems, among others.

During the last day of the symposium on September 8, participants were divided into three groups, constituting two sessions with one session on the feedback on the draft roadmap document which saw participants discussing key interventions and requirements for the roadmap. While session two focused on reporting back to the plenary and recommendation for inclusion evolving focus areas for SDGs Acceleration and Transformation. Participants during the session looked at key interventions from recommended key sectors to be emphasized in the roadmap. Group one dialogue on



the Voices and Actions for SDGs and Committing to Inclusive and Sustainable Transformation for Shared Prosperity."

During the first day of the consultation held Wednesday, September 7, technocrats from various government line ministries, agencies, and commissions as well as civil society organizations began the process of developing a SDGs Acceleration Roadmap highlighting a set of commitments to deliver in the next seven years up to 2030 expected to be presented at the SDGs Summit.

The discussions facilitated by a technical working group from the MFDP and a national consultant supported by the UN and led by UNDP Liberia, centered on issues of political will, planning, data, resource

Acceleration Actions for effective accountable and transparent institutions and scaling up actions on key transitions to accelerate SDGs progress, including mobilizing finance and investment through partnership. At the same time, group two dialogue on Acceleration for social protection systems including financial framework and partnership strategic and scaling up actions on key transitions to achieve the SDGs in Liberia.

Meanwhile, the various groups recommended that in order for Liberia to achieve the SDGs Acceleration and Transformation Roadmap, Liberia should make digital transformation works for all, adopt a life-long learning course for essential services and invest in peace. They also rec

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MORE HEADLINE NEWS

MORE HEADLINE NEWS

LCC launches Situation Room for election

The Liberia Council of Churches (LCC) on 11 September 2023, launched its Situation Room to serve as an information hub to monitor the elections scheduled to be conducted by

LCC Situation Room. "I am most pleased and honored by the invitation to launch The ELECTION SITUATION ROOM of the Liberia Council of Churches," said Amb. Wesseh. The Liberian diplomat said the

or let anyone take those ballots away from them." According to Amb. Wesseh, they lose their power and their voices if and when they do not vote. She said the people also lose their right to complain for the next six years if they vote foolishly.

She states that the LCC and its constituent member churches and denominations must all get involved in this process. "As the good shepherds the Bible reminds us about, they must lead and guide their flock," Amb. Wesseh urged the Church. On election day, she urged, the people must leave their houses, take their voting cards, in this case, the latest biometric voter identification card, and go to the polling center or prescient where they registered and cast their votes upon receipt of the ballot papers.

"We have ... presidential [and legislative] elections. So, each voter will be handed three sets of ballot papers. One to vote for the president of their choice, one to vote for the senator of the county, and the other ballot to vote for the representative of their choice in the district they reside."

She hoped that serious voter education was going on for the people to know how to cast their votes and for what offices. She continued that leaders of the churches must get involved by encouraging their people to go out on 10 October to leave their homes and abode to go out and cast their votes.

"The Bible says a good shepherd is there to lead his sheep. The good shepherd is not expected to lead his sheep astray. The shepherd protects his sheep from the moment he takes them out to graze till dusk when they all retire," Amb. Wesseh noted.



the National Elections Commission (NEC) this October. Through the Situation Room, the LCC will gather data from precincts from the 15 counties. LCC anticipates 20 campaign monitors, and 300 election day observers will be deployed throughout the country.

The LCC will also collaborate with other situation rooms and observers. In this way, the LCC leadership will be better informed to speak periodically on the conduct of the various campaigns and issues concerning the election.

Ambassador Medina Wesseh, former Secretary General of Mano River Union (MRU) officially launched the

whole world appears to want Liberia to succeed, adding that Liberians themselves must want to succeed also.

"Hundreds of international observers are to be deployed to monitor the election to ensure that it is free, fair and transparent. The Liberian Constitution gives power to the people to elect their government and to change that government if it fails to meet their needs," said Amb. Wesseh.

She explained that the way to exercise that power is to vote, noting that every vote counts.

"The next thing is they must get out on election day and go to the polls to cast their ballots. You as leaders must get involved to help ensure that the people must not sell their votes

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Make genuine commitment towards

greater choices, and freedom from fears, wants, and indignity. We loud the government for its determination and desire to join the rest of the world to launch a new global acceleration and transformation commitment for the SDGs, as the world finds itself off track to meet the

SDGs." She added

In furtherance, she said Liberia has responded to the UN Secretary-General's call for world leaders to help deliver a 'Rescue Plan for People and Planet' at the 2023 SDG Summit which is slated for 18-19 September 2023. She noted particularly that the

dedication of the country to preparing for the global summit are in addition to contributions made to the political declaration, stating that it will announce national commitments to drive SDG transformation in years ahead. Editing by Jonathan Browne

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GoL, UN-Liberia identify

ommended that Liberia should accelerate access to energy for all and shift to renewable energy, secured food, water and sanitation system, protect biodiversity and natural resources and prevent, new and reduce existing vulnerabilities. On behalf of development partners, UNDP

Deputy Resident Representative, Mr. Louis Kuukpen, extolled Liberia for the two days' intensive validation. He said Liberia has a better and stronger case to make during the pending summit in New York, which he believes will attract development and opportunity to Liberia. "We

are committed to support Liberia and we want to thank you for the validation process. We all have identified our weakness and strength with strategic recommendation on Liberia's achievement towards the SDG", Mr. Kuukpen said. Editing by Jonathan Browne

Nobody can rig Liberia's election

-LNBA claims

By Lincoln G. Peters

The Liberian National Bar Association (LNBA) believes that no political party or individual can rig the upcoming October 10, 2023, presidential and legislative elections.

The LNBA's statement is against speculation that there is a conspiracy to grossly subvert the will of the Liberian people during the October elections.

The LNBA described the speculation as evil, saying it has no foundation in the democratic system of the country.

Through a press statement dated 12 September 2023 under the signature of LNBA National Secretary General Cllr. Bornor M. Varmah, the Bar indicated that nobody or a political party can thwart the democratic wishes and aspirations of the Liberian people.

"The LNBA fully assures its membership and the Liberian public that no one has the capacity to rig the October 10

subvert the will of the Liberian people during these elections, we see this as completely evil and has no foundation in the Democratic system of our country" the LNBA noted.

The LNBA further disclosed that there is no window of opportunity for anyone to derail the peace of the country as it has received sufficient commitment from international partners that such actions by anyone will be materially consequential.

The LNBA at the same time welcomed the statement from the United States Embassy in Monrovia regarding the conduct of peaceful, creditable, and transparent elections. The US Embassy through its Charge d'Affairs, Catherine Rodriguez, at her first-round table press conference, indicated that the United States is also prepared to assist in efforts to keep these elections free, fair, and peaceful. She spoke of holding accountable anyone responsible for engaging in activities to undermine the democratic election process in Liberia through

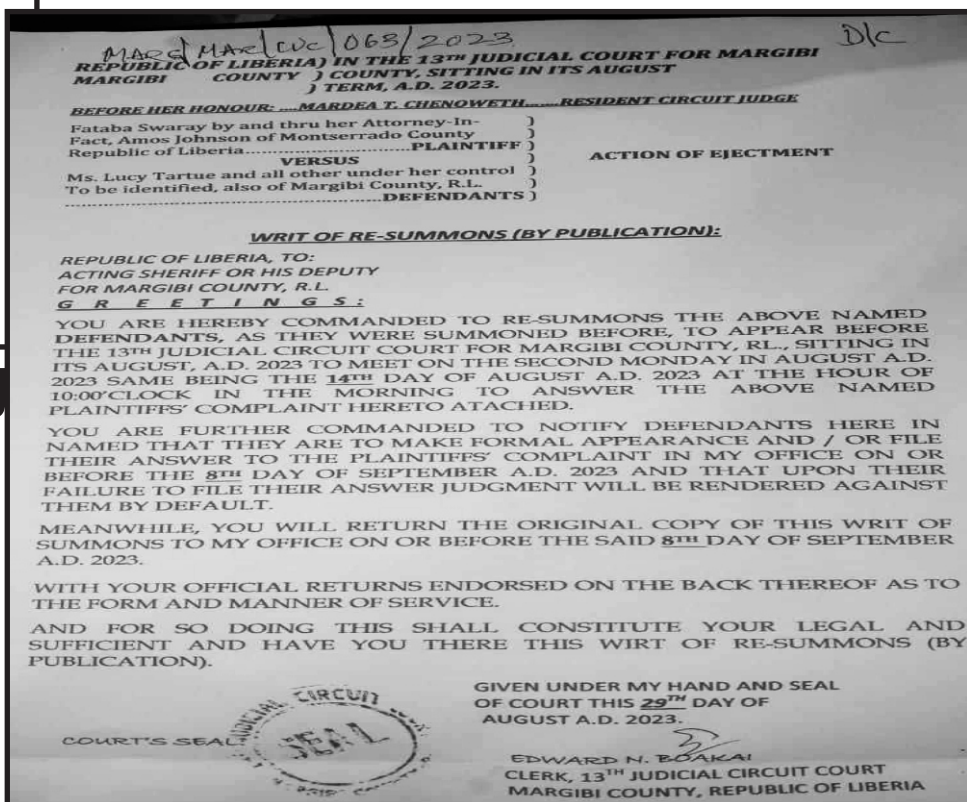


elections in order to thwart the democratic wishes and aspirations of the Liberian people," the release said.

"As to the speculation that there is a conspiracy to grossly

additional measures such as sanctions.

The LNBA however promised to work with the international community to protect Liberia's peace and democracy.



Français

Weah traite l'opposant Boakai de malhonnête

Le président George Mannah Weah a qualifié l'ancien vice-président Joseph Boakai d'homme malhonnête dont le parti, à

sénateur Johnson contre des poursuites judiciaires pour crimes de guerre quand il a informé l'Assemblée générale des Nations Unies qu'il souhaitait que son pays retournât au

nous voulions retourner au Palaver Hut. Ces gens que vous voyez là-bas, Boakai et son groupe, ont dit que Prince Johnson était protégé par George Weah afin qu'il ne



savoir le Parti de l'Unité (ancien parti au pouvoir), joue à un double jeu avec le sénateur Prince Y. Johnson du comté de Nimba. S'exprimant à Totota, dans le comté de Bong le lundi 11 septembre dans le cadre de la campagne électorale, le président Weah a déclaré que Boakai et ses militants l'avaient accusé de protéger le

Palaver Hut pour régler leurs différends en lieu et place d'un tribunal des crimes de guerre.

“ Prince Johnson, que j'étais accusé de protéger, est actuellement dans le camp du Parti de l'unité. Je me demande pourquoi ils ne le livre pas pour répondre aux accusations de crimes de guerre maintenant qu'il est avec eux.

Nous sommes allés aux Nations Unies et avons dit que

puisse pas aller devant le tribunal pour crimes de guerre”, a déclaré Weah à ses partisans.

“Écoutez, hier, j'étais très sidéré. J'ai écouté notre père Joseph Boakai. Je pense que Joseph Boakai a perdu quelque chose. Joseph Boakai était au pouvoir pendant 12 ans et l'hôpital de la Rédemption était

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La réalisation des objectifs de développement de la région est au centre d'un entretien entre africains à New York

Le représentant permanent du Libéria auprès de l'ONU et le directeur régional de l'UNFPA pour l'Afrique de l'Ouest et du Centre tiennent des discussions bilatérales sur la réalisation des objectifs de développement de la région

Le directeur régional du FNUAP pour l'Afrique de l'Ouest et centrale, Sennen Hounton, a exhorté les pays de la région, y compris le Libéria, à envisager d'avantager d'investissements nationaux dans les programmes liés à la santé sexuelle et reproductive et aux droits afin d'atteindre les objectifs de développement national.

S'exprimant récemment à New York, lors d'une visite de courtoisie au Représentant permanent du Libéria auprès des Nations Unies, l'Ambassadeur Sarah Safyn Fyneah, Directrice régionale de l'UNFPA pour

l'Afrique de l'Ouest et du Centre, a souligné la nécessité pour le Libéria de promouvoir l'égalité des chances pour les adolescentes en éliminant les principaux obstacles qui perpétuent leur marginalisation, y compris les grossesses d'adolescentes.

M. Hounton a félicité le gouvernement du Libéria pour son engagement renouvelé à répondre aux besoins de développement de la jeune population du pays, en particulier le programme

d'urgence actuel visant à répondre aux besoins des jeunes qui consomment des drogues et des substances nocives.

En réponse, la Représentante permanente du Libéria auprès des Nations Unies, l'Ambassadeur Sarah Safyn Fyneah, a félicité M. Hounton pour sa nomination au poste de Directeur régional du FNUAP pour l'Afrique de l'Ouest et du

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Éditorial

La mission d'observation électorale de l'Union Européenne est la bienvenue au Libéria

C'est avec joie et allégresse que nous apprenons la nouvelle du déploiement d'une mission d'observation de l'Union Européenne à travers le Libéria en vue des élections législatives présidentielles du 10 octobre.

Ces élections marquent une étape importante dans la consolidation de la démocratie au Libéria, a déclaré l'observateur en chef adjoint Jarek Domanski, qui est dans le pays depuis fin août.

Selon un communiqué de presse, la mission principale se concentrera sur le suivi des préparatifs électoraux et des activités de campagne dans les 15 comtés du Libéria.

L'observateur en chef adjoint Domanski a déclaré qu'un groupe d'experts, comprenant des spécialistes des procédures électorales, de la politique, du droit, du financement des campagnes électorales, des médias, des médias sociaux et de l'analyse des données, était présent dans le pays pour mener à bien cette mission.

La nouvelle devrait être bien accueillie par tous les Libériens qui souhaitent des élections pacifiques et la paix pour le Libéria.

La présence d'observateurs internationaux pour surveiller le scrutin dissuadera également les fauteurs de troubles potentiels qui envisagent de perturber le processus et de plonger le Libéria dans le chaos.

Cela indique que le peuple libérien n'est pas seul dans la recherche des élections transparentes et d'un processus démocratique. Pendant que des observateurs étrangers posent leurs valises dans le pays, il nous incombe, en tant que Libériens, de nous donner une bonne image, de faire savoir que nous sommes prêts à maintenir la paix et la stabilité de la nation.

Les élections ne durent qu'une journée, mais une fois que les résultats commencent à tomber, c'est le moment crucial pour toutes les parties de faire preuve d'un haut degré de maturité et de tolérance jusqu'à ce qu'un vainqueur soit déclaré par la Commission électorale nationale.

Comme l'a révélé l'observateur en chef Andreas Schieder, la mission d'observation électorale de l'UE a répondu à l'invitation du gouvernement du Libéria, ce qui devrait indiquer que le gouvernement est déterminé à organiser des élections libres, équitables et transparentes.

Il incombe donc à tous les Libériens de veiller à ce que les élections soient non seulement libres, équitables et transparentes, mais également exemptes de violence, pour le bénéfice de la génération actuelle et des générations à venir. Nous sommes convaincus que cela laissera une bonne empreinte pour la postérité à venir.

Français

Starts from page 8 **Weah traite l'opposant**

resté là en ruines pendant tout ce temps. Il n'y avait même pas de médicaments. Mais aujourd'hui, c'est ce même homme qui dit que s'il est élu, il va équiper l'hôpital de la Rédemption. Vous plaisantez j'espère. Est-ce une farce ou une blague? Oui je crois que c'est une blague", a dit le président en riant : "Comment une personne qui a passé 12 ans à la tête de l'Etat sans changer les conditions de vie des populations de New Kru Town peut maintenant demander qu'on vote pour lui tout en promettant qu'il approvisionner les hôpitaux publics en médicaments?"

Il a poursuivi en disant : « Vous savez quelque chose, quand j'ai écouté

l'opposition, en particulier notre père (Joseph Boakai), je me suis dit qu'il n'a rien compris. Il a dit que c'est lui qui arrangera tout, pourtant le Libéria, c'est 176 ans, il a passé 50 ans au gouvernement, il n'a rien fait pour lui-même, il n'a aucun moyen de réparer quoi que ce soit dans ce pays ».

Le président Weah devrait rester quatre jours dans le comté de Bong pour faire campagne en vue de sa réélection. Ses principaux challengers sont Boakai et l'ancien cadre de Cococola, M. Alexandar B. Cummings.

Cependant, la plupart de ses messages de campagne étaient destinés à Boakai plutôt qu'à M. Cummings. Les partisans de Cummings ont affirmé que le gouvernement n'avait rien à dire sur lui.

Starts from page 8 **La réalisation des objectifs de**

Centre et a réaffirmé l'engagement du Libéria envers la Commission de la population et du développement, conformément à la position commune africaine comme le prévoit la Déclaration d'Addis-Abeba.

« Les droits sexuels et la santé sexuelle et reproductive font tous partie des objectifs des ODD, et ils doivent être adoptés et soutenus si notre objectif commun est de ne laisser personne de côté », a déclaré l'Ambassadeur Fyneah.

Au cours de la réunion, l'Ambassadeur Fyneah et M. Hounton ont discuté du programme de soutien actuel du FNUAP et des domaines d'intérêt mutuel entre le FNUAP et le gouvernement du Libéria. Ils ont également partagé des notes sur le prochain Sommet ODD 2023, qui aura lieu les 18 et 19 septembre 2023 à New York.

Le Sommet des ODD de

2023 marquera le début d'une nouvelle phase de progrès accélérés vers les objectifs de développement durable avec des orientations politiques de haut niveau sur des actions transformatrices et accélérées jusqu'en 2030. Convoqué par le Président de l'Assemblée générale, le Sommet marquera la moitié du chemin vers la date limite pour réaliser l'Agenda 2030 et les objectifs de développement durable.

Le Libéria participera à un événement parallèle pour souligner l'importance du bien-être des adolescents dans le cadre de l'Agenda 2030 des ODD et de la Commission sur la population et le développement (CPD). L'événement parallèle est organisé par l'actuel président de la Commission sur la population et le développement (CPD), le gouvernement du Honduras, dans le cadre de la série d'événements commémorant le 30e anniversaire de la Conférence internationale sur la population et le développement.

La CEDEAO déploie 15 observateurs électoraux à long terme au Libéria



Le Président de la Commission de la CEDEAO, Dr Omar Alieu Touray, a approuvé le déploiement de 15 observateurs électoraux à long terme (OLT) pour surveiller les étapes clés du processus électoral menant aux élections générales du pays le 10 octobre 2023. Le déploiement est conforme aux dispositions des articles 12 à 14 du Protocole additionnel de 2001 de la CEDEAO sur la démocratie et la bonne gouvernance relatif à l'assistance aux États membres organisant des élections.

La Mission d'Observation à Long Terme (LTOM), dirigée par Monsieur Serigne Mamadou KA. La Division de l'assistance électorale comprend des experts en matière d'administration électorale, de genre et de société civile, de droit constitutionnel, de sécurité et de médias.

La mission LTO sera dans le pays jusqu'au 15 octobre 2023, pour observer les processus électoraux et servir également de mécanisme d'alerte précoce pour la

diplomatie préventive.

Au cours de leur séjour, les experts électoraux tiendront des séances de travail avec diverses parties prenantes, notamment la Commission électorale nationale (NEC), le gouvernement, les organisations de la société civile, les médias, les agences de sécurité, ainsi que les partis politiques et les candidats, afin d'assurer le bon déroulement du processus électoral.

Quelque 2 471 617 électeurs inscrits avec une population estimée du Libéria à 5,4 millions d'habitants éliront le nouveau président du Libéria, trente (30) sénateurs et soixante-treize (73) membres de la Chambre des représentants. Le président sortant George Weah, de la Coalition pour le changement démocratique (CDC), cherche à être réélu pour un second mandat.

Il fait face à 19 autres candidats, dont l'ancien vice-président Joseph Boakai du Parti de l'unité et Alexander Cummings de la Collaboration des Partis politiques (CPP).

Les OLT de la CEDEAO seront renforcées le 3 octobre par 80 de leurs collègues à court terme) issus du Conseil des Sages de la CEDEAO, du Parlement de la CEDEAO et de la Cour de Justice de la Communauté, des ministères des Affaires étrangères des États membres, des organes de gestion électorale et des organisations de la société civile.

La mission d'observation combinée, dirigée par le professeur Attahiru Jega, ancien président de la Commission électorale nationale indépendante du Nigeria, sera déployée dans les 15 comtés du Libéria, y compris la capitale nationale, Monrovia.

La Mission publiera une déclaration préliminaire dans les 48 heures après les élections, qui sera suivie d'un rapport final détaillé sur ses observations.

Mali: la Coordination des mouvements de l'Azawad se dit «en temps de guerre» avec la junte

L'État malien se dirige-t-il vers un nouvel épisode d'hostilités avec les ex-rebelles du nord du pays? Dans un communiqué, la Coordination des mouvements de l'Azawad (CMA) appelle les habitants de la région « à se rendre sur le terrain pour contribuer à l'effort de guerre » face aux forces armées et leurs supplétifs russes. Depuis fin août, des combats ont repris entre l'armée gouvernementale et les groupes du nord. Les deux parties s'accusent mutuellement d'avoir relancé les hostilités. Des événements qui remettent de plus en plus en cause les accords de paix d'Alger signés en 2015.

Dans son communiqué, le colonel Moulay Ag Sidi Mola, porte-parole de la Coordination des mouvements de l'Azawad, retrace la chronologie des derniers événements qui, selon lui, font le lit d'un nouveau conflit.

Une reprise des hostilités qui semble de plus en plus inévitable et que les ex-rebelles attribuent aux forces armées maliennes et aux mercenaires de Wagner.

La CMA appelle « tous les habitants de l'Azawad à se rendre sur le terrain pour contribuer à l'effort de guerre dans le but de défendre et

protéger la patrie et ainsi reprendre le contrôle de l'ensemble de leur territoire ».

La déclaration affirme que « l'armée nationale azawadienne » « a préparé des stratégies de résistance de court et de long terme ». Les mouvements du nord incitent également les civils à se tenir éloignés des positions tenues par les forces armées - les Fama - et



Wagner.

C'est via sa cellule d'information et de communication des affaires militaires que la CMA a diffusé sa déclaration. Une cellule créée afin, dit-elle, « d'éviter toute confusion » avec « d'autres acteurs externes ».

Une bataille de communication est livrée avec le gouvernement malien qu'ils accusent de faire volontairement l'amalgame avec les groupes terroristes.

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Inside Father Robert Tikpor's 96 Years on Earth Serving Liberia and the Holy Mother Church

The Catholic Church in Liberia is mourning the passing of the country's oldest Priest Rev. Father Robert Tikpor. Father Tikpor, as he was affectionately called, died on Thursday, August 31, at the age of 96 following a period of illness.

The prelate was the oldest Liberian Catholic priest and one of the longest serving. He twice served as National Orator at official programs marking the country's Independence Day celebration.

Father Tikpor was a vocal critic of vices in Liberian society.

But who really was this man who survived several challenging decades in the existence of the Church in Liberia and the country's traumatic years of wars and oppression.

The Life sketch

Rev. Monsignor Dr. Robert Gbatiae Tikpor was born in Freetown, Sierra Leone on 12th September, 1926 unto the union of Mr. Giahwhaxwi Tikpor, and Madam Michen Gbatiae Flow, who were both from Grand Bassa County, Liberia.

He was sent to his mother's mother in Liberia, with whom he grew up. He got early education at the St. Peter Claver Catholic School in Lower Buchanan and the St. Patrick Catholic School in Monrovia.

In 1946, he told the Fathers on Ashmun Street that he wanted to be a priest. He was accepted and then sent to the St. Peter Claver's Teaching Training College in Lower Grand Bassa County where he completed a three-year course program in three semesters. After he graduated from the Teacher's Training College, he was sent to the St. Theresa Minor Seminary, Ibadan, Nigeria in 1948. There he spent five years and received his School Leaving Certificate 1953 that was administered by External Examination Council of the Cambridge University in England, UK.

He then went to the St. Paul's Regional Major Seminary in Benin City, Mid-Western Nigeria, present day Edo State where he studied Philosophy and the Humanities for three years. After three years in Benin State and at the completion of his Philosophy Studies, He was asked returned to Liberia in 1955 for what was term at the time a Probation year. He was given a pastoral assignment at the St. Peter Claver's Teacher Training College where he previously attended.

He spent the time there with an old Priest, the venerable Rev. Fr. P. McKenna (the elder), whom Fr. Tikpor referred to as a fatherly modeled priest that shaped his formation strongly. In 1956, Fr. Tikpor (still in formation) was appointed the Principal of the St. Peter Claver's Elementary School. His work was to teach and assist other teachers in the school to instill morals and disciplines in the students. He was also appointed as head Catechist to work and plan the program that would lead to the organization of the catechumenate.

At the end of his probation year, he wrote a playwright called Dr. Zeopugar. He had the villagers perform the drama in a wholesome and captivating manner.

After his Probation year ended he returned for his Seminary studies in theology. He went to Ghana instead to the St. Paul's Seminary in Pedu, which has been divided - St. Paul's Seminary in Sowoutoum for Philosophy and St. Peter's Regional Seminary in Pedu for Theology. It was at the Seminary in Pedu that he joined other Liberian Seminarians; Michael K. Francis (the Late Archbishop Michael Francis), Benedict D. Sekey (The Late Bishop Benedict Sekey of the Diocese of Gbarnga) and David Gbanya Ziegler.

There he studied theology as well as Sacred Scriptures, Canon Law and Patrology from 1957 to 1961 and returned home to be ordained Liberia's second indigenous Roman Catholic Priest. He was ordained Deacon at the St. Paul Regional Seminary in Pedu in 1960 and served as the Prefect of the Seminary. He also served as a staff writer and later Editor of Seminary's Periodical, Vox Petrina.

Msgr. Tikpor was ordained on a Roman Catholic Priest on December 17, 1961 at the Sacred Heart Cathedral by his former teacher and illustrious Mentor Archbishop Francis D. Carroll who was then the Ordinary of the Archdiocese of Monrovia. He became the second Liberian Indigenous Roman Catholic Priest after Bishop Patrick Kla Juwle (who was once his teacher at the St. Peter Claver Catholic School). The time lapse between the ordination of the First and Second Liberian Priests was

Fifteen years (1946-1961).

Following his ordination Msgr. Tikpor worked in many parishes - Voinjama, Foyah, Gbarnga, Tappita, and in Monrovia, until 1972. His first appointments included assistant Parish Priest of the Cathedral Parish, Principal of St. Patrick's Elementary School, now Cathedral School, Priest-in-charge of St. Mary's Church, New Kru Town with Catholic Mission Out-Station in Bomi Hills, and Choir Director at Sacred Heart Pro-Cathedral. In 1963, he took brief assignments in Voinjama, Lofa County and Gbarnga, Bong County to serve as Interim Pastor as Missionary Priests Fr. Fergus (Voinjama) and Fr. Martin O'Meara (Gbarnga) had to leave for their successive three months vacations respectively. In the same year, he was taken to Ireland by Archbishop Carroll to meet his aging benefactress Mrs.

Ann Gordon of Ballaghaderreen in County Mayo. The SMA Fathers also used this time to take him to Rome for the first time. Excited young Fr. Tikpor spent three weeks in Ireland with his benefactress, visited Lourdes in France and to the Vatican in Rome where he saw and listened to the addresses of Pope John XXIII the first time. On his return to Monrovia, he was assigned with Fr. Davis, SMA to visit Bomi Hills Catholic Community every weekend for Mass.

In 1964, Archbishop Francis Carroll asked him to accompany President William V. S. Tubman as his Extraordinary Catholic Chaplain for the Unification Conference held in Kolahun, Lofa County. At a special Unification Service at the Catholic Church, young Fr. Tikpor delivered a smart discourse focused on People and Leadership decisions. He gained the admiration of the President who after the conference invited Bishop Carroll and him to a meeting.

In 1965, he was assigned to Tappita in upper Nimba to establish a mission there. The mission grew largely after seven years of his pastoral duties there. When Fr. Tikpor arrived there, there were only five baptized Catholics; but by 1972, at his departure, St. Francis Catholic Church in Tappita had 300 adult Catholics on its baptismal register, a fully functional school from Kindergarten to 9th Grade and a reassuring catechumenate.

In the year 1972, he was sent to the United States of America where he did some studies at the Catholic University in Washington D.C. He returned to Liberia in 1974 with an M. A. degree, and together with the then Reverend Father Michael Francis, were told to open Liberia's own Major Seminary at Gbarnga, Bong County.

They worked together to build the Seminary. In 1976, Fr. Michael K. Francis was appointed to be Archbishop of Monrovia, and He was appointed to succeed him as Rector of the Seminary.

In 1979, he went to Rome, Italy to study at the University of St. Thomas Aquinas (The Angelicum). In June, 1980 he graduated with Licentiate Degree in Sacred Theology (Magna Cum Laude). In June 1981, he completed and defended his Doctoral Dissertation in Sacred Theology (S. T. D.) "Traditional Theism in African Creation Myths with the Bassa (Liberian) Djuankadju" as central theme.

Since his return in June 1981 he worked in the Archdiocese of Monrovia up to the time of his retirement from pastoral duties. In 2001, he reached the canonical age for retirement from active service. With that official age (75 years old) came the church's high honors for long and persevering services to Mother Church and the State. The title Monsignor (My Lord) is a title of honors reserved to the Holy Father, the Pope.

In addition, he had been blessed throughout his many years of priestly service by our country. He has served as National Orator twice, (1997 & 2010) the only National Orator in Liberia's 163 year history, and has received many distinctions, including the Grand Band of Africa - conferred by Her Excellency, President Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf on July 24, 2007.

He had remained in St. Kizito Parish as he did not want to retire to a place that he would have nothing to be doing. Furthermore, there were work that requires priests in every parish; hence with the consent of the Archbishop, he remained in St. Kizito Parish helping the new pastor in any way possible. Due to his waning strength, he moved to the Regina Caeli Manor on 8th Street - Sinkor at the close of the year 2013 where he remained until his demise.



The late Priest Rev. Father Robert Tikpor

RIA drug bust overshadows 2023 campaigns

The confiscation of boxes continuing illicit drug over the weekend at the Roberts International Airport (RIA) in Margibi County appears to have overshadowed ongoing campaigns for the 2023

part of the Liberia Drug Enforcement Agency's investigation, which included scientific examination, samples tested revealed the presence of the illicit drug, which is banned under the

"The latest drug smuggling through the RIA reminds of the \$100M cocaine smuggled into Liberia through the Freeport of Monrovia, for which a lame, conspiratorial and collusive investigation and prosecution saw the perpetrators walked out of jail and away from Liberia with no consequences for the commission of an international crime, on the watch of the Weah-led Government.

Liberians are also reminded about the illegal importation of arms and ammunition through the same Freeport of Monrovia. Again, a lame investigation and conspiratorial cover-up led to no arrests, no prosecution, and accordingly no conviction for international arm smuggling into the country.

To date, amidst reports of the training and arming of private militias and ex-combatants by some government officials, no public accounting exists for the smuggled arms and ammunition," the CPP said.

The party said Liberia has become increasingly lawless under President Weah's six-year rule. It asserted that officials with responsibility to ensure the integrity of the country's borders are being caught in schemes and collusion to aid and abet the breaking of not just Liberian laws, but the commission of international crimes.

"Kush and other dangerous drugs are addicting and killing our children. Liberia is being robbed of its future by poisoning the minds of our young people," the CPP said.

Sometime last year, a container of cocaine valued at US100 million was discovered in the warehouse of a frozen food importer, TRH Trading Company, situated in Topoe Village along the Japan Freeway outside Monrovia.

Few months later in February this year, cocaine worth US37 Million was discovered in another container belonging to TRH Trading Company.

Change (CDC) is seeking re-election for a second term.

He faces 19 other candidates, including former Vice-President Joseph Boakai of the Unity Party and Alexander Cummings of the Collaborating Political Parties (CPP).

Weah names VP Taylor as successor

President George Manneh Weah has told citizens of Bong County that the country should prepared for a second female President, while naming his Vice President Jewel Howard Taylor as the Coalition for Democratic Change (CDC) potential Presidential candidate for 2029.

The President outlines gains his government has made in five years across the country, building roads, hospitals, free-tuition schemes, vowing that if given a second-term, there would be a bigger picture in terms of development.

Mr. Weah expresses confident of victory, with support of the people of Bong, bragging that he is born to succeed and as true gift to his people to do all in his power to improve their livelihood.

He rallies electorate in the county to they give him a first round victory, noting that he has done all, and there is no difference the opposition will make for the people.

"Give me the remaining six years, let me finish what I have started", President Weah pleads.

He also assures the people of Gbartala, Bong County, his commitment to electrifying their main street with solar energy, while in Salala, District, Bong County, he dedicated a newly constructed market.

The project was implemented by the Liberia Agency for Community Empowerment (LACE) with over 40 solid tables that have

Vice President Taylor is a native of Bong County and announcement that by Mr. Weah that she would be is most likely successor when he's given opportunity to serve his second six years term could sway citizens of Bong to his reelection bid.

Mr. Weah also appealed to citizens of Bong stating that he needs the second term to complete his development projects which he started in his first term. After the rally in Palala, President Weah switched on the lights to provide electricity to about 89 homes in that rural part of the country. Additional 211 homes are expected to be connected as connection exercise continues.

Earlier on Monday, Mr. Weah



promised to focus on more developments in the county, if he is re-elected on October 10th.

dignified the district and its residents. *Editing by Jonathan Browne*



Presidential and Legislative elections.

It all started when a contingent of the Armed Forces of Liberia (AFL) detailed at the airport arrested and placed under investigation RIA's Security Manager, Samuel Freeman, for his alleged attempt to smuggle several cartoons of suspected contraband directly from the tarmac into a minivan, using an unauthorized exit at the airport.

The arrest follows denials and claims that the contents of the boxes were mere Moringa leaves, flooding the local media, including social media with calls for the Government of Liberia to come clean.

On Tuesday, 12 September, which marked six weeks into a tense campaign, the Liberian Government through the Ministry of Justice confirmed that the consignment of boxes intercepted contained illicit drug called methamphetamine.

A press statement signed by Information Minister Ledgerhood Rennie, confirms that the consignment of boxes intercepted at the airport contains herbal plants - packaged in natural form and has been identified as Methamphetamine.

Methamphetamine is a powerful, highly addictive stimulant that affects the central nervous system. It takes the form of a white, odorless, bitter-tasting crystalline powder that easily dissolves in water or alcohol.

Government noted that as

rules of United Nations Office of Drugs and Crimes, UNODC. Government stated in its statement that the Minister of Justice had, with immediate effect, ordered the Joint Security of Liberia including the LDEA, LNP and the NSA, to expand their investigations on the importation of the illegal drugs with the aim of bringing to justice, all those involved.

However, after the confirmation by Government that the substance contained in boxes were illicit drugs, opposition the Collaborating Political Party (CPP) took a swipe at the George Weah regime, condemning the continuous smuggling of illicit drugs here. In its press statement titled "Weah Makes Liberia Lawless And Unsafe: Drug Smuggling On The Rise, the National Campaign Committee to Elect Candidate Alexander B. Cummings President of Liberia said, the confirmation by the State that the so-called moringa leaves being smuggled under the facilitation of the head of security at the RIA points the ringleader of the smuggling directly to the Office of President.

The CPP said the disturbing details raise serious questions about the security at Liberia's ports of entry, as well as the collusion of senior government officials in smuggling and peddling of dangerous narcotics in the country.

Starts from page 5 EU Election Observers venture

preventive diplomacy. During their stay, the electoral experts will hold working sessions with various stakeholders, including the National Elections Commission (NEC), government, civil society organizations, the media, security agencies, as well as political parties and candidates, toward ensuring a smooth electoral process.

Some 2,471,617 registered voters among Liberia's estimated population of 5.4 million, will elect Liberia's new President, thirty (30) Senators, and seventy-three (73) members of the House of Representatives.

Incumbent President George Weah of the Coalition for Democratic

Starts from page 6 Audit is politicized

to the Liberia Anti-Corruption Commission (LACC).

But Konneh claimed that the Justice Minister had opposed such a plan because she could not take their power and give it to another institution. Konneh said what he thought Mrs. Sirleaf could have done was to pass an executive order on that.

the culture of that place before you talk about reform and do away with politics. Konneh is a senatorial candidate for Gbarpolu County, the county where he was born. For his part, the President of AME University Rev. Alvin E. Attah thanked the former Minister for accepting the invitation of his institution and providing knowledge to the instructions.

He added that when you come to any institution, you should improve your reform based on your understanding of that institution, and then the structure will work. Konneh noted that in every institution, you have to first understand

Rev. Attah said he looks up to more interactions with the former finance minister.

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CPP donates LRD 1.8 million to desperate flood victims

-in Grand Cape Mount County

The Collaborating Political Parties (CPP) has donated L\$1.8 million worth of building materials to victims of the flood disaster, in Robertsports,

reaching out to them. A spokesperson for over 27 families expressed gratitude to the CPP for the rapid response to their request for urgent assistance to help rebuild



CPP Leader Mr. Alexander Cummings

Grand Cape Mount County. Lake piso, which reached a dangerously high level, destroyed over 10 houses which rendered dozens of residents homeless in the Kru community in Robertsport last week. Making the donation of the L\$1.8 million worth of building materials including zinc,

relocate and begin rebuilding their homes. They expressed the hope that Liberian Government authorities and other Liberians as well as humanitarian organisations will come to their aid to help them rebuild their lives.

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