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# Boakai's vision unrealistic

**-CDC raises doubt**

Pres. Boakai      CDC Chair Mulbah Morlu

# Justice Minister-designate in US\$58,814.08 fraud

Cllr. Cooper W. Kruah

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# Continental News

## Nigeria rebukes states for quitting regional bloc

Nigeria has accused Mali, Burkina Faso and Niger of letting their people down by quitting the Economic Community of West African States (Ecowas). It is the first comment from the chair of the economic and

They accuse Ecowas of being influenced by external powers and failing to help them tackle the jihadist violence in their countries. Reports from Niger on Monday said 22 people had been killed in a suspected jihadist attack on a village near the border

in Niger in July, Burkina Faso in 2022 and Mali in 2020. Ecowas called on all three countries to return to civilian rule. In its statement on the three countries' departure, Nigeria's foreign ministry accused them of not acting in good faith and criticised their military leaders.

"Unelected leaders engage in a public posturing to deny their people the sovereign right to make fundamental choices over their freedom of movement, freedom to trade and freedom to choose their own leaders," it said. The ministry added that Nigeria, which is by far the biggest member of Ecowas and is Niger's main economic partner, remained willing to engage with the three countries.

Last week, Burkina Faso announced it had received 25,000 tonnes of free wheat from Russia, which re-opened its embassy there in December. The embassy had been closed since the collapse of the Soviet Union. Russia, condemned by Western states for waging war in Ukraine, has been seeking to forge new alliances in Africa and elsewhere.

But it is just one of several major actors now stepping up efforts to court political and economic influence in Africa alongside not only China but also India, Turkey, the Gulf states and South Korea as well as Western nations and Japan. BBC



People celebrate leaving Ecowas in Niger's capital, Niamey

political body since the three governments announced their decision to leave on Sunday. The three states were already suspended from Ecowas after recent coups.

Their military rulers have distanced themselves from ex-colonial power France and strengthened ties to Russia. Arguing that they wanted to restore security before organising elections, they formed a mutual defence pact in September called the Alliance of Sahel States.

with Mali. A local official said people had arrived in Motagatta in the Tillaberi region on motorbikes and started shooting people.

Withdrawal will hit hard given that the community guarantees visa-free travel and the right of settlement and work in member countries, according to an analysis by AFP news agency.

Mali, Burkina Faso and Niger were all founding members when Ecowas was set up nearly 50 years ago. Relations between the three countries and the with Ecowas had been tense after coups took place

## Zimbabwe court frees Job Sikhala after almost 600 days

Zimbabwe opposition politician and former MP Job Sikhala is finally a free man after a record 595 days on pre-trial remand.

A Harare magistrate has sentenced Sikhala and his co-accused, MP Godfrey Sithole, to a two-year, wholly suspended term for five years. Sithole was granted bail after five months on remand. They were both convicted of inciting public violence.

Sikhala's lawyers say they will appeal against the conviction at the High Court.

He was arrested in June 2022 and charged with encouraging the violence that followed the discovery of the dismembered body of Citizens' Coalition for Change (CCC) activist Moreblessing Ali in a well, three weeks after she went missing.

The news triggered violence in Ali's Chitungwiza neighborhood, some 30km (19 miles) south of Harare, the capital. Sikhala, who was the Ali

family lawyer, was accused of having used social media to encourage the violence. He denied the charge.

Convicting the duo, the trial magistrate said evidence showed that Sikhala, then a member of parliament, and Sithole were responsible for the violence.

The courts granted Sithole bail after five months in remand, but Sikhala's several applications for bail failed.

This fed rumours that Sikhala was a victim of persecution by the state. He said he had been arrested more than 60 times without a single conviction.

Sikhala's legal woes are, however, far from over. According to his lawyer, he is still facing charges of disorderly conduct, inciting violence and publishing falsehoods.



The opposition figure had been convicted of inciting violence

## Kenya's visa-free dream proves tricky for some

Kenya's President William Ruto was celebrated last year when he announced his country would be going visa-free for African visitors, but many have been surprised by the new requirements, which have introduced fresh costs and paperwork for some. Adio, a Zimbabwean citizen living in Germany, was not anticipating any issues at Bremen airport when he arrived for his flight to Kenya earlier this month. But at the check-in desk he was asked to show a document saying he had permission to enter Kenya. "We had a short argument at the counter. I insisted I didn't need one," said the 33-year-old who works in the tech sector. Had he travelled a week earlier, Adio would have been right. Nationals of Zimbabwe, along with more than 40 other countries including several from Africa, were previously able to arrive in Kenya, get a stamp on their passport and enter without paying. So, when Kenya announced it would be visa-free for everybody from 1

(ETA) every time they enter Kenya. The ETA is for single entry and is valid for 90 days. It costs \$30 and takes up to three days to process. Only citizens from countries in the East African Community (EAC) are currently exempt. Documents needed to get an ETA include flight details and proof of a hotel booking.

"For people like myself, it is inconvenient. Before, we could come to Kenya without needing anything," said Adio. Kenyan immigration lawyer Davis Nyagah believes that the ETA is essentially a "visa under another name". "From a legal perspective, there is no difference between an ETA and a visa. The only difference is that Kenya will no longer put the visa sticker in your passport," he told the BBC. He wondered whether the blanket introduction of the ETA for everyone - with the exception of those from the EAC - was a way to "equalise travellers", replacing an older system that saw countries categorised for entry. There may also be a revenue-raising element as all visitors must now pay \$30 every time they enter. Previously travellers could pay \$50 for a multiple-entry visa that could be



January 2024, Adio thought the same rules would apply. "Once I scanned my phone to find the new details on entry into Kenya, I then realised visa-free wasn't really visa-free at all," he told the BBC.

He spent the next few hours frantically going through various agencies to fast-track the new application process, which cost him around €150 (\$160; £130).

By the time the documentation came through, he had missed the first leg of his flight.

Like others, Adio was under the impression that Kenya's new visa-free policy would ease travel.

But under new rules, travellers must get an

valid for several years. There is nothing unusual about the introduction of ETAs - for example they are used by the US, Canada and Australia, and the European Union will soon be requiring them. But other visa-free countries in Africa, like Rwanda, do not require any authorisation prior to arrival and there is no cost to enter for the large majority of travellers.

Rwanda said it had experienced a 14% increase in African visitors a year after removing visas in 2018. It used to cost \$30, but now people can come for up to 30 days without paying.

But for Kenya there is a security element to the new system.

# EDITORIAL

## UP government should come with clean hands

Circumstances surrounding the expenditure of US\$650,000 for the poorly organized inaugural ceremony of President Joseph Nyumah Boakai have a very high likelihood to taint the image of the new administration that campaigned on integrity and accountability to ascend to power, if nothing is urgently done to set the record straight and erase suspicions both within and outside the ruling UP.

By every account so far, nothing seems to be clear on how funds allotted for various aspects of the inaugural ceremony at which people fainted because of severe heat and dehydration, were expended, with tales of diverse shades being told.

Hell broke loose when a total of US\$365,000 allotted by President Boakai for ordinary citizens to celebrate his inauguration in all 73 districts across the country with each district apportioned US\$5,000 is greeted with noise and discrepancy. As if this was not enough, the woman who headed the President's inaugural committee, Auntie Miatta Fahnbulleh, told a media briefing Thursday, January 25, 2024 in Monrovia that she was never in control of activities for which she reportedly received huge cash.

Rather, she blames the former administration, security officers, protocol personnel everyone else, but herself, as head, for everything that went wrong on Inauguration Day, January 22, 2024 that was characterized by severe heat, lack of seats and water for guests, which nearly turned fatal for President Boakai himself!

Auntie Miatta is yet to account clearly how funds received for the program she presided over was expended, with people she claimed to have given money for specific activities, such as media, US\$50,000, and several thousands to an entertainment group "Kukatono" (we are one) refuting that they received far less than the amounts announced. Addressing the Ministry of Information's regular press briefing on Thursday, January 25, on Capitol Hill, she pointed fingers at the former Director-General of the General Services Agency (GSA) Madam Broh, revealing that the former GSA boss allegedly received funding for the renovation and preparation of the Capitol Building where the inauguration was held, but due to the poor management, progress was only halfway.

According to her, every time she tried to inquire, the consistent response she received was that the responsibility fell on the GSA.

She narrates that prior to the ceremony, she decided to confront Madam Mary Broh, but the meeting ended in deadlock, alleging that Broh obstructed preparations for the inaugural ceremony.

But reacting on Spoon Talk last week Thursday, Madam Broh said she didn't receive a dime, contrary to allegation by Auntie Miatta that the former GSA boss received a larger chunk of the US\$650,000 inaugural budget for logistical purposes. She explains that she has in her possession vouchers for cars that were rented for the occasion.

Besides, the National Chairman for the now ruling Unity Party, Rev. Dr. Luther Tarpeh is vividly struggling to account for the US\$3650,000 allotted by the President for the 73 electoral districts to celebrate. Without consultation with other party executives in Monrovia, Chairman Tarpeh explains that UP county chairpersons from all 15 counties requested for some of the money to have their own celebrations, so he authorized disbursement of US\$1,000 from the amount to each county chair for said purpose.

It is hard to comprehend how a party that preached equity, accountability and moral leadership throughout the entire campaign could entangle itself and have its hands stained in the disbursement and expenditure of the first public money it handled right from the onset of its six-year rule.

# COMMENTARY

By Yu Yongding

## China's Economic Prospects Are Brighter Than They Appear

**B**EIJING - The start of 2024 has been marked by a wave of increasingly pessimistic forecasts for China's economy. While the Chinese government remains optimistic, the International Monetary Fund projects that GDP growth will slow to 4.6% this year, from 5.4% in 2023. Meanwhile, the Chinese stock-market rout is expected to continue after share prices fell to their lowest level in five years.

But China's economic prospects are brighter than they appear. While the government has yet to publish its own outlook for 2024, most Chinese economists expect it to set an annual growth target of 5%. Given China's better-than-expected economic performance in 2023, I believe that 5% growth is both necessary and feasible.

Consumption was the main driver of Chinese growth in 2023, accounting for 82.5% of the increase in GDP. The Chinese government has not released its final consumption figures, but retail sales of social consumer goods serve as a useful proxy. Such sales increased by 7.2% last year, reflecting a recovery in consumer spending after a dip in 2022. But sustaining this growth momentum seems unlikely, and many Chinese economists expect a significant consumption slowdown in 2024.

Weighed down by weaker global demand, China's net export growth declined by 1.3% in RMB terms in 2023. Given that the global economic outlook is unlikely to improve in 2024, it is reasonable to expect that the contribution of net exports to China's GDP growth will be minimal. Consequently, to meet a 5% GDP growth target, investment growth must increase significantly. China's fixed asset investment (FAI), a proxy of capital formation, rose by only 3% in 2023, however, compared to 5.1% in 2022.

The FAI consists of three primary categories: manufacturing, real estate, and infrastructure. Within the manufacturing sector, several industries experienced significant growth in 2023, as investments in electrical machinery and equipment, instruments and meters, automobiles, and high-tech surged by 34.6%, 21.5%, 17.9%, and 10.5%, respectively. But the overall increase in manufacturing investment was just 6.3%, compared to 9.1% in 2022. Meanwhile, real-estate investment fell by 9.1% in 2023 and, despite signs of improvement, is still expected to decline this year.

If manufacturing investment fails to rise significantly, and the recovery in real-estate investment remains underwhelming, a rough calculation - based on available and somewhat inconsistent data - indicates that infrastructure investment would need to grow by more than 10% to compensate for the decline in consumption growth. Given that infrastructure investment increased by just 5.8% in 2023, achieving double-digit growth poses a significant challenge.

Nevertheless, the fact that the Chinese

economy is in a quasi-deflationary period, with both the consumer price index and the producer price index in negative territory, enables policymakers to introduce significant fiscal stimulus to boost economic growth without having to worry about inflation, at least in the short term.

Considering these deflationary pressures, the People's Bank of China should ease its monetary policy and set its inflation target at 3-4%. Acknowledging the endogeneity of the money supply, the PBOC should place greater emphasis on interest rates as a short-term macroeconomic tool, rather than directing financial resources toward specific industries and companies.

Infrastructure investment remains the government's most effective instrument for stimulating the economy when demand is weak. Should the government encounter difficulties in financing infrastructure investment through the issuance of sovereign bonds, the PBOC could implement its own version of quantitative easing and purchase government debt on the open market.

Contrary to some economists' claims, China is not grappling with excessive infrastructure investment. In fact, the country still has a large infrastructure gap that it must close, especially in critical areas such as health care, elderly care, education, scientific research, urban development, and transportation. Its public facilities fall short of those in developed countries and even lag behind some developing economies.

To be sure, infrastructure investment tends to be unprofitable and does not generate significant cash flows, which is why such investments should be financed directly through government budgets. But to ensure that China meets its infrastructure needs, policymakers must invest in efficient, high-quality projects.

China's decision to issue an additional CN¥1 trillion (\$137 billion) in government bonds in 2023 marked a significant policy shift. By allowing the budget-deficit-to-GDP ratio to increase from 3% to 3.8%, the Chinese government has signaled that it may no longer limit annual budget deficits and public debt to 3% and 60% of GDP, respectively (on the model of the European Union's Maastricht Treaty).

While the government's top priority in 2024 is to boost economic growth and restore economic confidence, China must also grapple with high local-government debt and an ongoing liquidity crisis in the real-estate sector that, if left unaddressed, could escalate into a full-blown debt crisis.

Fortunately, the Chinese government has the financial resources it needs to confront these challenges head-on. By implementing expansionary fiscal and monetary policies and pursuing meaningful reforms, China would be well-positioned to reverse its decade-long economic slowdown in 2024 and maintain robust growth for years to come.

# ON 2ND THOUGHTS



with Othello B. Garblah

## The Supreme Court's intervention in recent electoral disputes

### -Why the need for rerun in Grand Bassa County District #5

The Liberian Supreme Court on Wednesday, January 17, 2024, ordered an immediate recount in several electoral districts across the country where alleged vote manipulation had been reported following the October 10, 2023, Presidential and Legislative elections.

Among the districts in which the Supreme Court mandated immediate recounts was Grand Bassa County District #5, the case involving incumbent Representative Thomas Goshua of the Coalition of Political Parties (CPP) and Mrs. Juah S. Dennis of the Unity Party. The purpose of the High Court's decision was to ensure complete compliance with the Electoral Law of Liberia which seeks transparent and accurate determination of election results that reflect the will of the electorates.

However, it appears like this mandate has not been fully complied with in Grand Bassa District number 5, rather it seems to have exposed further frauds or discrepancies from the National Elections Commission's (NEC) own tally sheets.

A comparison between the October 10, 2023, results that were announced by NEC and the January 2024 recounts shows overwhelming discrepancies. At some polling centers the recount shows an increase in the number of voters that turn out, while in other places the number of people who turn out witnessed reduced. And that is besides the disputed results which show 29 points difference between the two leading candidates.

The Board of Commissioners at the National Elections Commission (NEC) needs to examine critically to make a bold decision.

From various accounts in the district, some of the ballot boxes were brought in with either their seals broken or swiped on different boxes thereby creating doubts, with many suggesting that the boxes were tampered with ahead of the recount.

As if that was not enough, the number of ballot papers automatically increased in some boxes, while in others they decreased. At Behn Town Palava Hot Polling place #2, for example, the total number of voters who were reported to have shown up on October 10, 2023, was put at 219. During the recent recount, the NEC Magistrate reported 331. Again, in the same Behn Town at another polling center where it was reported that only 250 voters showed up, the recount reported 300.

On October 10, polling place 4 in Korkor David Town reported turnout on October 10 to be 239, during the recent recount this month, NEC Magistrate reported that only 198 voters showed up.

The recount also shows discrepancies in total validated votes. On October 10, NEC reported that at least 20931 voters turned out to vote in the disputed district. However, during the recent recount, NEC reported 20951.

In addition to these overwhelming discrepancies, authorities at NEC failed to implement fully the Supreme Court's mandate. The High Court mandate calls for a total recount which should include the total number of ballot papers (both used and unused, spoiled and discarded) along with total valid and invalid votes. NEC only concentrated on valid votes during the recount. NEC also failed to produce the PO journals and FRR.

Another thing that has cast doubt over the recount is that for instance, ballot boxes that recorded say 350 ballot papers reported missing ballot papers reinforcing the belief that the ballot boxes were tampered with but in whose favor?

One of the candidates in the disputed election also claimed that days to the scheduled recounts, men slept in the Magistrate Warehouse for days. The matter was said to have been brought to the attention of the local police detachment in the area, but nothing was done to arrest the situation.

Ballot boxes from some polling stations did not only have their seals broken but some were replaced with seals that were not recorded during the October poll.

Whether there was consistent fraud or not, the absence of PO Journal, FRR, refusal to count all ballot papers used or unused along with broken seals as well as discrepancies speaks volumes. And such a display of total disregard for transparency shown by NEC's Magistrates at the local level leaves much to be desired.

That said the NEC BoC needs to conduct a thorough investigation if possible, and see reasons for a possible rerun.

## OP-ED

By Imme Scholz

## Why "the Rest" Are Rejecting the West

LONDON - As the war in Gaza enters its fourth month, many in the Middle East and across the Global South have been struck both by the ferocity of Israel's military campaign and by Western governments' unwavering support for it. To them, this is as much US President Joe Biden's war as it is Israeli Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu's, and the continuing indifference to the scale of the devastation has reaffirmed how cheap Arab lives appear to be to Western leaders.

For those who lived through the Cold War and witnessed how Western powers dealt with post-colonial states and their peoples, recent events are all too familiar. As I argue in my new book, *What Really Went Wrong: The West and the Failure of Democracy in the Middle East*, the United States and other Western countries, mainly the United Kingdom, have for nearly a century pursued an interventionist, militaristic, and anti-democratic foreign policy that largely ignores Middle Eastern peoples' interests. If anything, Western decisions have been driven historically by the desire to roll back communism and secure the dominance of liberal capitalism.

In pursuit of these twin aims, the US offered Middle Eastern leaders a zero-sum choice: either join in Western-led regional defense alliances and open your economy to global capital, or be considered a foe. In the name of maintaining stability and securing an uninterrupted flow of cheap oil, Western powers struck devil's pacts with Middle Eastern autocrats and actively contributed to the demise of incipient democratic movements.

Notably, in the early 1950s, when the liberal democrat Mohammed Mossadegh became prime minister of Iran and nationalized the country's oil, the CIA and MI6 orchestrated a coup and replaced him with the Shah. That self-interested intervention arrested Iran's democratic development and set the stage for the 1979 Islamic Revolution, which ushered in the theocratic regime that rules to this day.

Similarly, in the 1950s, Gamal Abdel Nasser, a charismatic leader who was positively disposed toward the US, became president of Egypt and decided that it was not in his country's interest to join a Western-led defense pact. Seeking to humiliate him and force his ouster, America and Britain rescinded support for the massive Aswan High Dam project on the Nile River. What resulted was the Suez Crisis of 1956, which almost caused a world war. In the end, the most popular leader of the most populous Arab state became a bitter enemy of the West.

While the US-led West has certainly taken a heavy-handed approach in other regions as well, Western officials have long rationalized their neo-imperial mission in the Middle East by claiming that the combination of Islam and Arab culture is incompatible with democracy. The implication is that brutal strongmen are essential to the stability that the West so values.

The lesson for those strongmen has been unambiguous: repression and human-rights abuses will be ignored as long as America's orders are followed. For the people of the region, the lesson has been no less plain: their lives and rights mean little in the West's calculus - notwithstanding all its lofty rhetoric about democracy and the rule of law. The invasion and decades-long occupation of Afghanistan and Iraq made that abundantly clear.

Barack Obama was the first US president to hint at a different approach. Speaking at the US Military Academy at West Point in 2014, he decried America's perpetual wartime footing and tendency to shoot first and ask questions later. America's costliest mistakes in the region had come not from restraint, he argued, but from the "willingness to rush into military adventures without thinking through the consequences - without building international support and legitimacy for ... action; without leveling with the American people about the sacrifices required."

Sadly, Obama's sober perspective appears to be lost on Biden, who belongs to the Cold War generation of American leadership. Until last October, Biden had devoted little time or attention to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. He readily accepted the untenable status quo of perpetual Palestinian suffering, and focused instead on trying to expand the Abraham Accords. Those agreements, brokered by the Trump administration, sought to normalize Israel's relations with Arab autocrats in exchange for security assistance and protection, thereby ending the region's commitment to Palestinian statehood.

Since Hamas's brutal attack on October 7 - which exposed the folly of Biden and Netanyahu's approach - there has been neither restraint nor an effort to think through the consequences of the current war. Instead, Biden and his European allies have wholeheartedly endorsed Israel's all-out assault on Gaza. Even as the civilian death toll has risen at an unprecedented pace, the humanitarian crisis grows more acute by the day, and governments around the world have called for a ceasefire, Biden has shown no willingness to intervene to stop the bloodshed.

Meanwhile, skirmishes on the Israel-Lebanon border and US-led airstrikes on Houthi positions in Yemen and on Iranian-backed militias in Iraq suggest that the conflict may yet escalate further. America and Britain are gradually being sucked into the region yet again, though with eyes wide open this time. Biden claimed to represent a clean break from Trump, but there is no daylight between them when it comes to the Middle East. There and in much of the Global South, Biden will be remembered as just another American president who devalued Arab lives, preaching democracy while supporting repression and violence.

Biden may soon regret his wholehearted embrace of Netanyahu in recent months. Netanyahu, an expert at manipulating the American political process, recently rebuffed Biden's support for establishing a Palestinian state, insisting that Israel must have security control "over all the territory west of the Jordan [River.]" That pronouncement was timed to the start of the US presidential campaign, in which Trump is his preferred candidate.

Even if Biden ultimately secures a second term, the tragic irony is that the Middle East is less stable today than at any point in its modern history. The West's strategy has been a colossal failure, and this legacy will burden our world for a very long time.

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# MORE HEADLINE NEWS

# MORE HEADLINE NEWS

## Boakai admonishes UMU graduates

By Lincoln G. Peters

President Joseph Nyumah Boakai has admonished graduates of the United Methodist University (UMU) to

themselves. "My dear graduates, I would like to speak to you briefly about a topic very dear to my heart, one of a mindset shift that is critical to the way we view our country,

decline in good moral standards is of great concern to him.

He said it is becoming increasingly evident that until they address bad public behaviour in society, generations will come to believe norms that are inimical to society.

According to him, the lack of respect and love for each other is demonstrated daily in many ways across society in the way they think and talk and use media channels including the radio to tear each other apart for greed and selfish reasons. "Citizens, it seems now, are prepared to undermine each other, and lie to protect their jobs, even if it is detrimental to the public good," he said. "It is disheartening that very few people now subscribe to values and principles. These vices are becoming pervasive in society with young people feeding on them as the new normal," Amb. Boakai urged. He further recommended that citizens must start challenging these predominant norms that have overtaken society and negatively impacted behaviour.

"We need a mindset shift to break the recurring challenges of underdevelopment in our country; we must see things differently, treat others with mutual respect, and view service from a more compassionate lens than individualism and greed, which fuels the scourge of corruption so prevalent in our country."

society, and each other: "Transforming the Mindset for Societal change," said President Boakai.

He further indicated that it should not be about harmful individualism that leads to greed and corruption but about societal change for the common good.

"We are aware that years of war and violence have had a social impact on our country, but we must also acknowledge that we have had many years of peace, stability, and opportunities to reshape society, in ways that should allow us to frown on behaviours that eat the very fabric of society," he pointed out.

Mr. Boakai lamented that the

remember that their mindset informs their behaviors which in turn shapes the society.

Boakai delivered the keynote at UMU's 19th commencement under the theme: "Transforming the Mindset for Societal Change." He urged the graduates to embrace change and shift in paradigm, noting that to build a better society, they must begin holding conversations that will lead to a positive mindset shift now.

President Boakai charged the graduates to transform their mindset for societal change, noting that Liberians spend more time bringing each other down and missing the opportunity to upgrade



## Senate probes US\$40m claim

By Ethel A. Tweh

The Plenary of the Liberian Senate has ordered the Central Bank of Liberia (CBL) to clarify contradictions between President Joseph Nyumah Boakai and ex-President George Manneh Weah on the financial balance in the Consolidate Account. The Senate has mandated its joint committees on Public Accounts and Audit, Banking, and Currency to invite the CBL authorities.

This order is due to ex-President Weah's claim that his regime left US\$40m in the Consolidated Account, while President Weah stated that the facts at the CBL do not agree with this figure.

During the presidential transitional period between

made in 2018 during the transitional period, which ushered in the now former ruling CDC.

"In 2018, Madam Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf reported leaving about US\$150 million with the Liberian people, but when President Weah took over, he indicated that what he was inheriting was empty. These kinds of signals puzzle a lot of Liberians," he added.

The River Gee County Senator stressed that the statement by President Boakai indirectly suggests that the country is broke. He noted that the two different claims have the propensity to undermine the security of the state when the health, education, and security sectors are underperforming in the national budget.

"When people believe that the government has a lot of money and



## Liberia declines in Transparency International's Corruption Perception Index 2023

In its 2023 Corruption Perception Index (CPI), Transparency International (TI), a global coalition against corruption, reported that Liberia has declined by 7 points from 32 in 2018 to 25 in 2023.

The Corruption Perception Index scores and ranks countries based on how corrupt their public sectors are perceived, according to experts and business executives. The score ranges from 0 (highly corrupt) to 100 (very clean), where 0 equals the highest level of perceived public sector corruption and 100 equals the lowest level of perceived public sector corruption. 180 Countries were targeted in 2023 as in 2022.

In a statement issued in Monrovia, the Center for Transparency and Accountability in Liberia (CENTAL), the National Chapter of Transparency

International through its Executive Director Anderson D. Miamen said it is deeply concerned over Liberia's consistently poor performance, especially her place among the Worst Decliners globally.

CENTAL's statement said, the poor performance speaks to the Liberian Government's inability to address the entrenched culture of impunity for corruption, despite

enacting new anti-corruption laws and amending existing ones to make them stronger. The anti-corruption watchdog group cited the lack of investigation and prosecution of current and former government officials sanctioned by the US Government for corruption as some of the reasons behind the country's decline. Additionally, the statement said the weak enforcement of anti-corruption laws and limited financial

▶ CONT'D ON PAGE 10



Weah's Coalition for Democratic Change (CDC) regime and Boakai's Unity Party (UP), then-President Weah disclosed that over US\$40 million was left in the country's operational account at CBL.

But during Boakai's first State of the Nation Address before the 55th Legislature, he revealed that the Liberian government had in its operational account a total of US\$20.5 million.

President Boakai's report showed a US\$19.5 million difference and has sparked a serious public debate. Members of the Liberian Senate and the House of Representatives have also been concerned about these two statements. River Gee County Senator Francis Dopoe submitted a written communication to the plenary on Tuesday, 30 January 2024, asking the body to invite and quiz authorities of the CBL to clarify the actual amount in question. When his communication was placed on the floor for plenary deliberations, Senator Dopoe recounted that similar contradictory statements were

they're out there don't have medications and on the other hand people are also saying that indeed, there is no money, it calls for concern," Dopoe said. "So, I call on this honorable body to allow an investigation into this matter [so] that the public has an immediate clarity," Senator Dopoe noted.

Also speaking, River Gee County Senator Jonathan Boye-Charles Sogbie backed his colleague and informed the plenary that the investigation through the public hearing will tell between the former and current presidents, who are telling lies to the citizens.

The plenary's decision was made by a motion from Montserrado County Senator Abraham Darius Dillon. He also included in his amended motion that the joint Public Account and Audit and Banking and Currency Committees take siege of the matter with the Public Account Committee (PAC) being the lead committee in charge of the hearing.

The committee is to report to the plenary next Tuesday after which members of the body shall make the appropriate legislative determination to the Liberian people.



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**FOR THE CONSULTANCY SERVICE TO STRENGTHEN THE NETWORKS OF CROSS  
BORDER WOMEN ASSOCIATIONS AND SUPPORT MARKET ASSOCIATIONS  
THROUGH CAPACITY BUILDING AND NETWORKING IN THE PROJECT  
COMMUNITIES**

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**COUNTRIES:** Sierra Leone and Liberia

**Sector:** Gender Equality

**Mode of Financing:** Grant

**Project ID:** P-Z1-ID0-009

**Grant No:** 5900155016801

**Issued Date:** 30 January 2024

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The Mano River Union Secretariat has received a grant from the African Development Fund to implement the project to Build Inclusive Business Ecosystems for Stabilization and Transformation (BI-BEST) in the Mano River Union (MRU) and intends to apply part of the agreed amount for this grant to payments under the contract for the recruitment of a consultant to Provide Support for the Formation and Strengthening of Associations and Networks of Women Cross- Border Traders in Project Communities.

The services to be provided under the Assignment include the following:

1. Organize project beneficiaries/cross border women traders across project communities in associations based on value chain affiliation or involvement and develop strategies and activities that will lead to institutional strengthening and increased participation and awareness among members/cross border women traders.
2. Develop strategies that will lead to cross border women trader associations influencing national and regional markets.
3. Strengthen capacity of cross border women associations to improve negotiation, advocacy, and networking skills to adequately engage national and regional actors as well as improve management performance.

The assignment will be undertaken Two Months (not to exceed 40 working days), from the date of signature of contract.

The Mano River Union Secretariat is therefore inviting eligible individual consultants to indicate their interest in providing these services. Interested Consultants shall provide information on their qualifications and experience (cover letter, supporting documents referencing similar services and showing demonstrated experience in similar assignments, etc.) to undertake this Assignment.

Eligibility criteria, establishment of the short-list and the selection procedure shall be in accordance with the African Development Bank's "Procurement Policy and Methodology for Bank Group funded Operations" (BPM), dated 2015, which is available on the Bank's website at <http://www.afdb.org>. MRU is under no obligation to shortlist any consultant who expresses interest.

Interested Individual Consultants may query, obtain further information or Terms of Reference (ToR) from the Procurement Specialist email address: [kensah@mru.int](mailto:kensah@mru.int) during the Office's working hours between 09:00 to 17:00 hours GMT.

Expressions of interest must be delivered to the address below by February 20<sup>th</sup>, 2024.

Sierra Leone time and mention "CONSULTANCY SERVICE TO STRENGTHEN THE NETWORK OF CROSS BORDER WOMEN ASSOCIATIONS AND SUPPORT MARKET THROUGH CAPACITY BUILDING AND NETWORKING".

**Attention:**

**Mano River Union Secretariat  
32 S Spur Loop, Wilberforce, Freetown  
Rep. of Sierra Leone  
Tel: +232 76-964-965  
E-mail : [procurement@mru.int](mailto:procurement@mru.int)**

AFRICAN DEVELOPMENT  
BANK GROUP**MANO RIVER UNION**  
**UNION DU FLEUVE MANO****REQUEST FOR EXPRESSIONS OF INTEREST (REOI)****FOR THE CONSULTANCY SERVICE TO FACILITATE BUSINESS REGISTRATION OF  
CROSS BORDER WOMEN TRADERS AND CONDUCT SENSITIZATION CAMPAIGNS  
AND COMMUNITY DIALOGUE ON WOMEN RIGHTS IN PEACE, SECURITY & TRADE  
FOR SOCIAL COHESION WITHIN BORDER COMMUNITIES.****COUNTRIES:** Sierra Leone and Liberia**Sector:** Gender Equality**Mode of Financing:** Grant**Project ID:** P-Z1-ID0-009**Grant No:** 5900155016801**Issued Date:** 30 January 2024

The Mano River Union Secretariat has received a grant from the African Development Fund to implement the project to Build Inclusive Business Ecosystems for Stabilization and Transformation (BI-BEST) in the Mano River Union (MRU) and intends to apply part of the agreed amount for this grant to payments under the contract for the recruitment of a consultant to Conduct the Sensitization Campaigns and Community Dialogue on Women Rights in Peace, Security & Trade for Social Cohesion within Border Communities.

The services to be provided under the Assignment include the following:

1. To increase sensitization and awareness on gender-based violence and issues negatively affecting Women Cross-Border Traders and their communities in project locations in Sierra Leone and Liberia
2. To conduct sensitization campaigns on business registration, GBV related issues and promote community dialogue on peace, and security involving cross-border women in project areas/communities.

The assignment will be undertaken Two Months (not to exceed 45 working days), from the date of signature of contract.

The Mano River Union Secretariat is therefore inviting eligible individual consultants to indicate their interest in providing these services. Interested Consultants shall provide information on their qualifications and experience (cover letter, supporting documents referencing similar services and showing demonstrated experience in similar assignments, etc.) to undertake this Assignment.

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Expressions of interest must be delivered to the address below by February 20<sup>th</sup>, 2024.

Sierra Leone time and mention "CONSULTANCY SERVICE TO FACILITATE BUSINESS REGISTRATION OF CROSS BORDER WOMEN TRADERS AND CONDUCT SENSITIZATION CAMPAIGNS".

**Attention:**

**Mano River Union Secretariat**  
**32 S Spur Loop, Wilberforce, Freetown**  
**Rep. of Sierra Leone**  
**Tel: +232 76-964-965**  
**E-mail : [procurement@mru.int](mailto:procurement@mru.int)**

# Français

## Les trois pouvoirs de l'Etat seront soumis à des audits périodiques, selon le nouveau président

Le président libérien Joseph Nyumah Boakai a affirmé que les trois pouvoirs de l'Etat, à savoir le pouvoir législatif, le pouvoir judiciaire et le

publics demandant à tous les bureaux publics de rendre compte de l'argent des contribuables.

Une grande partie de la pression en faveur de la

internationales rapportée à la fin de décembre 2023 était de 220 millions de dollars américains.

Il a ajouté que le rapport de 40 millions de dollars en tant que solde du compte consolidé du gouvernement du Libéria (GoL) au 19 janvier 2024 n'est pas étayé par les faits.

"Le solde rapporté par la CBL à la même date était de 20,5 millions de dollars américains et non pas de 40 millions de dollars", a déclaré Boakai.

"À cet égard, nous réaffirmons notre engagement antérieur à effectuer des audits et à veiller à ce que des audits réguliers deviennent une pratique dans tous les pouvoirs de l'Etat, et non seulement dans l'exécutif", a-t-il souligné.

Boakai a détaillé que la dette publique à fin décembre 2023 s'élevait à 2,21 milliards de dollars américains, soit une augmentation de 8,67 % par rapport à la dette de décembre 2022 qui était de 2,08 milliards de dollars américains.

Il a indiqué que cela représentait une augmentation marquée de 1,33 milliard de dollars par rapport à la dette de fin décembre 2017 qui était de 878,17 millions de dollars (soit une augmentation de 601,8 %).

Il a noté que le fardeau de la dette du Libéria a augmenté de manière astronomique. Il a certifié que la mission de sauvetage était une nécessité pour la transformation du

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pouvoir exécutifs, seront soumis à des audits réguliers.

M. Boakai a réitéré son message de campagne concernant la lutte contre la corruption lors de son premier discours sur l'état de la nation (SONA) prononcé au Capitole le lundi 29 janvier 2024 à Monrovia.

Les pouvoirs législatif et judiciaire du Libéria ont toujours échappé aux auditeurs au fil des ans, malgré les protestations

transparence est exercée sur le pouvoir exécutif, au moment même où les législateurs s'allouent des fonds dans le budget national pour financer des projets qui devraient être réalisés par l'exécutif dans leurs circonscriptions.

Selon le président Boakai, l'objectif de la classe moyenne libérienne doit devenir une réalité dans les six prochaines années.

Le président libérien de 79 ans a déclaré que la position nette des réserves

millions de dollars américains, et non de 40 millions de dollars », a déclaré le président Boakai.

La question du solde laissé tant dans les réserves internationales du pays que dans les comptes consolidés a été un point de discordance entre les gouvernements successifs de l'histoire récente du pays.

En 2018, Weah avait dit avoir trouvé environ 7 millions de dollars américains dans le compte consolidé de l'Etat du Libéria, et environ 150 millions de dollars

américains dans les réserves internationales du pays, ce que l'administration d'Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf avait démenti à l'époque.

Ainsi, le public attend la réponse de l'administration Weah à la dernière révélation du président Boakai, contestant le récit de Weah.

Le président Boakai a également réaffirmé l'engagement de son

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## Boakai contredit Weah sur le montant qu'il a laissé dans la caisse de l'Etat

Le président Joseph N. Boakai a vivement contesté les dires du président sortant George M. Weah, selon lesquels il a laissé 40 millions de dollars américains dans les caisses de l'Etat pour l'année fiscale 2023 qui s'est terminée le 31 décembre 2023.

Le président Boakai a, lors de son discours sur l'état de la nation prononcé le lundi 29 janvier 2024, fait savoir qu'il ne restait que 20,5 millions de dollars américains.

« La position nette des réserves internationales rapportée à la fin de décembre 2023 s'élevait à 220 millions de dollars américains. La déclaration concernant les 40 millions de dollars américains comme solde du compte consolidé de l'Etat du Libéria au 19 janvier 2024 ne repose pas sur des faits tangibles. Le solde rapporté par la Banque Centrale du Libéria à la même date était de 20,5



## Éditorial

### Le nouveau gouvernement doit faire preuve de transparence

Le gouvernement du Parti de l'Unité (UP) se trouve à un carrefour critique, alors que les circonstances entourant l'utilisation des 650 000 dollars pour la cérémonie d'investiture du président Joseph Nyumah Boakai risquent de compromettre sérieusement l'image de la nouvelle administration. Ayant fait campagne sur des principes d'intégrité et de responsabilité, le gouvernement actuel doit agir rapidement pour rectifier la situation et dissiper les suspicions qui planent aussi bien au sein du parti au pouvoir qu'à l'extérieur.

À ce jour, la gestion des fonds alloués à divers aspects de la cérémonie d'investiture, marquée par des incidents tels que des pertes de conscience dues à la chaleur intense et à la déshydratation, demeure floue, avec des récits contradictoires qui émanent de différentes sources.

La controverse a atteint son paroxysme avec l'allocation de 365 000 dollars par le président Boakai pour permettre aux citoyens ordinaires de célébrer son investiture dans les 73 districts du pays.

Cette décision a suscité des réactions bruyantes et des divergences d'opinions. Pour aggraver la situation, Aunty Miatta Fahneh, la responsable du comité d'investiture présidentielle, a déclaré lors d'une conférence de presse à Monrovia le 25 janvier 2024 qu'elle n'avait jamais eu le contrôle des activités pour lesquelles elle aurait prétendument reçu des sommes importantes.

Au lieu de prendre la responsabilité, Aunty Miatta a pointé du doigt l'ancienne administration, les agents de sécurité, le personnel du protocole, et tous les autres, se déchargeant de toute responsabilité pour les problèmes survenus lors de la cérémonie d'investiture du 22 janvier 2024.

Cette journée a été marquée par une chaleur intense, un manque de sièges et d'eau pour les invités, mettant même en danger la santé du président Boakai lui-même.

Aunty Miatta doit rendre des comptes clairs sur la manière dont les fonds alloués à son programme ont été dépensés. Des témoignages indiquent que certaines personnes ont reçu des montants bien inférieurs aux annonces officielles, notamment dans les médias (50 000 dollars) et auprès du groupe de divertissement "Kukatono" (nous sommes un).

Lors d'une conférence de presse régulière du ministère de l'Information le 25 janvier, Aunty Miatta a accusé l'ancienne directrice générale de l'Agence des services généraux (GSA), Madame Broh, d'avoir reçu des fonds pour la rénovation et la préparation du bâtiment du Capitole où s'est tenue l'investiture. Cependant, en raison de la mauvaise gestion, les progrès n'ont été accomplis qu'à moitié. Madame Broh, réagissant sur Spoon Talk la semaine dernière jeudi, a nié avoir reçu un centime, détenant des reçus pour les voitures louées pour l'occasion.

Le président national du parti au pouvoir, le Rév. Dr Luther Tarpeh, se retrouve également dans une position difficile pour rendre compte des 365 000 dollars alloués par le président pour que les 73 districts célèbrent. Sans consulter les autres dirigeants du parti à Monrovia, le président Tarpeh explique que les présidents de comté de l'UP des 15 comtés ont demandé une partie de l'argent pour organiser leurs propres célébrations, et il a autorisé le versement de 1 000 dollars à chaque président de comté à cet effet.

Il est difficile de comprendre comment un parti qui a prêché l'équité, la responsabilité et le leadership moral tout au long de la campagne pourrait s'embourber et avoir les mains tachées dans la distribution et la dépense du premier argent public qu'il a géré dès le début de ses six années au pouvoir.

Il est impératif que le gouvernement de l'Uppr Pradeshe prenne des mesures immédiates pour rétablir la confiance du public. Une enquête approfondie et transparente sur les dépenses d'investiture est nécessaire pour dissiper les doutes et garantir la responsabilité. La transparence et l'intégrité doivent être les piliers fondamentaux de cette administration, et il est temps de montrer au public que le gouvernement est déterminé à respecter ces principes. La crédibilité de l'administration en dépend.

# Français

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## Les trois pouvoirs de l'Etat

Libéria. S'exprimant lundi, il a déclaré que le Libéria est sous sanction en raison du non-paiement des cotisations à l'Union africaine et à la Banque africaine de développement.

De plus, le président Boakai a déclaré qu'un défaut de paiement d'environ 650 000 dollars américains à la Banque européenne d'investissement empêche le déblocage de plus

de 13 millions de dollars américains pour la route Sanniquellie-Loguato.

"Nous réintroduisons les Règles fiscales et l'Ordonnance sur les voyages, en plus d'autres mesures pour contribuer à résoudre le gaspillage et les abus et assurer le retour d'une gestion fiscale prudente. Nous veillerons à ce que l'exécutif donne l'exemple", a promis le président Boakai au peuple libérien.

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## Boakai contredit Weah sur le montant

gouvernement à procéder à des audits périodiques au niveau des trois pouvoirs de l'Etat.

"À cet égard, nous réaffirmons notre engagement antérieur à effectuer des audits et à veiller à ce que des audits réguliers deviennent une pratique dans toutes les institutions de l'Etat, et non

seulement dans l'exécutif", a souligné le président Boakai.

Cependant, un document en possession du New Dawn prétendument être celui des données de la Banque centrale montre le solde tel que cité par l'ancien président Weah dans son discours.

## La dette du Libéria atteint 2,21 milliards de dollars américains

Le président Joseph Nyumah Boakai a annoncé que la dette publique actuelle du Libéria s'élève à 2,21 milliards de dollars américains, soit une augmentation de 8,67 % par rapport à l'année précédente.

"Le stock de la dette publique à la fin de décembre 2023 s'élevait à 2,21 milliards de dollars

américains, soit une augmentation de 8,67 % par rapport à la dette de fin décembre 2022 qui était de 2,08 milliards de dollars américains", a déclaré Boakai lors de son premier discours sur l'état de la nation (SONA) le lundi 29 janvier 2024.

Il a précisé que cela représente une augmentation significative de 1,33 milliard de dollars par rapport à la dette de fin décembre 2017, qui était de 878,17 millions de dollars (soit une hausse de 601,8 %).

Selon lui, le fardeau actuel de la dette du pays a augmenté de manière astronomique, ajoutant que la mission de sauvetage était certainement une nécessité pour la transformation du Libéria.

"En ce moment même, le Libéria est sous sanction en raison du non-paiement des cotisations à l'Union africaine et à la Banque africaine de développement", a déclaré Amb. Boakai.

Il a également noté qu'un défaut de paiement d'environ 650 000 dollars américains à la Banque européenne d'investissement empêche le déblocage de plus de 13 millions de dollars américains pour la route Sanniquellie-Loguato.

Le Président Boakai a indiqué que son administration

réintroduirait les Règles fiscales et l'Ordonnance sur les voyages, ainsi que d'autres mesures visant à résoudre le gaspillage et les abus et à garantir le retour à une gestion fiscale prudente.

Il a promis aux Libériens que son administration veillerait à ce que l'exécutif donne l'exemple.

"Le Libéria est doté de ressources naturelles abondantes. Avec plus de 40 % de la forêt équatoriale d'Afrique de l'Ouest, notre pays abrite une diversité de flore et de faune qui devrait contribuer aux opportunités de croissance économique et agricole", a déclaré Boakai.

Il a souligné que le Libéria est également un leader dans le débat sur l'atténuation du changement climatique, soulignant davantage l'importance des partenariats internationaux pour une production agricole et un développement durables.

M. Boakai a souligné l'importance de reconnaître que les terres arables disponibles sont sous-utilisées, s'engageant à mobiliser les bonnes ressources et à renforcer la collaboration avec les partenaires internationaux et les agriculteurs locaux pour améliorer la production.

Présentant son programme législatif pour le Libéria, Boakai a promis de travailler avec les législateurs accomplir les vœux du peuple.

Il a affirmé qu'ils se concentreraient sur la définition des résultats qu'ils souhaitent obtenir de leur programme de développement.

## Les États-Unis soutiennent la conservation des éléphants et la réduction des conflits homme-faune



animaux sauvages.

Malheureusement, certains de ces conflits ont entraîné la mort de résidents de la communauté. Des éléphants de forêt ont également été tués en représailles par des habitants en colère par le passé.

Au cours des deux dernières années, le programme a soutenu avec succès l'Autorité de développement forestier et les communautés concernées dans la réduction des conflits homme-faune.

L'une des réalisations clés du programme est d'aider les communautés à protéger leurs fermes avec des solutions pratiques, atténuant ainsi les conflits potentiels avec les éléphants.

En offrant des alternatives viables et en promouvant des

L'Agence des États-Unis pour le développement international (USAID), en partenariat avec Elephant Research and Conservation (ELRECO), a célébré la réussite de son activité de réduction des conflits homme-faune le 29 janvier à l'ambassade des États-Unis.

Des partenaires de développement et des représentants des ministères et organismes gouvernementaux libériens se sont réunis pour commémorer la clôture officielle du programme.

Soixante-dix-neuf communautés des comtés de Lofa, Gbarpolu et Grand Cape Mount ont bénéficié du programme. Pendant des décennies, les agriculteurs de ces communautés forestières se sont trouvés en confrontation directe avec les éléphants et d'autres

approches non confrontationnelles, l'USAID a aidé les communautés à créer des solutions durables tant pour la conservation de la faune que pour les moyens de subsistance des communautés dépendantes de la forêt.

Le directeur de la mission de l'USAID au Libéria, M. Jim Wright, a déclaré au groupe réuni que le leadership durable et l'engagement sont essentiels pour capitaliser sur ces progrès afin que davantage de communautés forestières puissent atténuer avec succès les conflits homme-faune.

## Secteur halieutique et économie bleue : Le Maroc tient une série de rencontres bilatérales au Libéria



Le ministre de l'Agriculture, de la pêche maritime, du développement rural et des eaux et forêts, Mohammed Sadiki, a tenu, vendredi au Libéria, des rencontres bilatérales avec la Directrice Générale de l'Autorité Nationale des Pêches et de l'Aquaculture du Libéria, Emma Metieh Glassco, la ministre de la Pêche et de l'économie maritime de la République de Guinée, Charlotte Daffé, et le ministre des Ressources animales et halieutiques de la Côte d'Ivoire, Sidi Tiémoko Touré, sur le secteur halieutique et l'économie bleue.

Tenues en marge du lancement de la campagne scientifique conduite par le bateau scientifique Al Hassane Al Marrakchi de l'INRH au Libéria le 26 janvier 2024, ces rencontres se sont concentrées sur des aspects cruciaux de la coopération sud-sud, mettant en avant l'expérience réussie du Maroc dans le développement du secteur halieutique, indique un communiqué du ministère de l'Agriculture, de la pêche maritime, du développement rural et des eaux et forêts.

Cette dynamique a donné naissance à une première série de propositions englobant des actions concertées dans des

domaines clés tels que la formation maritime, la recherche scientifique, l'échange d'expertise, et le renforcement des capacités des gestionnaires et des opérateurs du secteur de la pêche, fait savoir la même source.

Les pourparlers ont également examiné des initiatives telles que l'organisation de visites d'études dédiées aux hauts responsables en charge de la pêche et de l'aquaculture marine, ainsi que la promotion du partenariat privé par le biais d'échanges de visites entre les opérateurs économiques du secteur de la pêche, ajoute le communiqué.

Parallèlement, une réflexion approfondie a été lancée sur la nécessité d'organiser des sessions de la commission mixte, visant à raviver la coopération halieutique entre les pays. Ces sessions, en tant que moteur essentiel de la relance de la collaboration, seront étroitement surveillées pour garantir la mise en œuvre cohérente et efficace des initiatives convenues.

Cité dans le communiqué, M. Sadiki a souligné que la tenue de ces rencontres bilatérales témoigne de l'engagement profond du Maroc envers le continent africain et de sa volonté d'établir une coopération sud-sud durable, permettant de dynamiser le secteur halieutique en tenant compte des enjeux du développement durable du secteur halieutique et de la préservation des ressources marines vivantes et la protection de l'environnement marin.

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# House summons CBL

## -over GOL's bank balances

By Bridgett Milton

2024, in which the Ex-President announced that he was handing over to the next administration a net international reserve of Two Hundred Twenty-Two Million, Seven Hundred Thousand United States dollars.

million, and the report of US\$40 million as the GoL's consolidated account balance as at January 19, 2024, is not supported by the fact, and that the balance reported by the CBL as of the same date was US\$20.5 million, highly encumbered, not US\$40 million.

He stresses that it is the Fundamental Rights of the Public to be informed about the Government and its functionaries as enshrined in Article 15 (c) of the 1986 Constitution of the Republic of Liberia. "In pursuance of the right, there shall be no limitation on the public right to be informed, and as such the information should be accurate and consistent. In the above-mentioned case, there is inaccuracy and inconsistency", the lawmaker notes.

Also speaking, Rep. Dixon W. Seboe said there is need to check in the consolidated account to ascertain the facts surrounding the circumstances.

He recalls that when former President Weah took power in 2018 the amount of money he met and the amount announced when he was leaving are far better so it is good to know who's telling the truth.

Meanwhile, the House of Representatives voted that authorities of the Central Bank of Liberia be invited before full plenary this Thursday, February 1, 2024, to provide clarity on the matter. Editing by Jonathan Browne

The House of Representatives has summoned the Central Bank of Liberia to provide clarity over the accuracy and consistency of



the Government of Liberia's net international reserves and government's consolidated account balances as of December 31, 2023; January 19, 2024, and January 24, 2024, respectively.

The summon followed a communication from Margibi County District #2 Representative Ivar K. Jones and Montserrado County District #16 Representative Dixon W. Seboe.

According to Rep. Jones, his communication is induced by former President George Mannah Weah's last address to the nation on January 21,

Mr. Weah said total cash balance in the Government's Consolidated Accounts is United States Dollars Forty Million, Forty-Four Thousand, Three Hundred Sixty-Five Dollars, and Ninety Cents.

But Representative Jones notes that the former President's statement is not being concurred with by his successor, President Joseph Nyumah Boakai.

In his first State of the Nation Address on January 29, 2024, President Boakai said, the net international reserves position reported at the end of December 2023 was US\$220

### Starts from page 5 Liberia declines in Transparency International's

support to public integrity institutions such as the Liberia Anti-Corruption Commission and Public Procurement and Concession Commission have contributed to the decline.

"This year's poor result shows the scale of the problem the Boakai-led administration is inheriting. On the other hand, it is a test of his anti-corruption credentials--whether bold commitments being made will be matched by visible concrete actions to end impunity for corruption, reverse the decline, and take Liberia up the CPI ladder", the statement said.

The CPI draws upon 13 data sources, which capture the assessment of experts and business executives on several corrupt behaviors in the public sector. These corrupt practices and behaviors include bribery, diversion of public funds and supplies, use of public office for private gain, procurement irregularities, state capture, and nepotism in the civil

service.

Also, some of the sources assess mechanisms available to prevent and address corruption in a country. Examples include the government's ability to enforce integrity mechanisms; financial, logistical, and moral support to anti-graft institutions; independence and viability of anti-graft institutions; the effective prosecution of corrupt officials and others accused of corruption; conflict of interest prevention; access to information; freedom of speech and the media; and legal protection for whistleblowers, witnesses, journalists, and investigators.

Ranked 145/180 among countries covered by CPI 2023, Liberia's position as one of the biggest decliners on the CPI has been cemented dropping by a massive 16 points from 41 in 2012 to 25 in 2023. In West Africa and the Mano River Union, Liberia is the only country that has declined by 7 points over the last 6 years. This is corroborated by

CENTAL's 2021, 2022, and 2023 State of Corruption Reports, which reveal that 90% of Liberians think the Corruption level is high in the country, with low citizens' confidence in the executive branch of government to fight against corruption.

The index said Sub-Saharan Africa average is 33, the lowest in the world. Ninety percent of countries in Sub-Saharan Africa scored under 50. In the last decade, 43 countries in the region have either declined or made no significant progress. Since 2012, Liberia (25), Mali (28), and South Sudan (11) have significantly declined on the CPI. On the other hand, some significant improvers over the last few years include Seychelles (71), Senegal (43), Ethiopia (37), Tanzania (40), Kenya (31), Côte d'Ivoire (40) and Angola (33). With a score of 71, the Seychelles earned the highest mark in the region, followed by Cape Verde (64) and Botswana (59) as second and third-place holders. Equatorial Guinea (17), South Sudan (13),

# Harassment, extortion along Luogatuo-Monrovia route

By Thomas Domah, Nimba County

Commercial drivers plying the Luogatuo-Monrovia highway have alarmed harassment and extortion by state security.

The aggrieved drivers, some of whom are members of a local union, United Congress Drivers Transport Union of Liberia (UCDTUL) joined their colleagues from other areas in complaining that they have been constantly harassed by Liberian Joint Security forces assigned at the Luogatuo, who allegedly extort money from them.

According to them, there are more than 20 security checkpoints along the Luogatuo-Monrovia route where security at each of those checkpoints collect 200 Liberian Dollars from every vehicle that plies the route, totaling LRD4,000 per day, a

money before being allowed to pass thru.

Some drivers including motorcyclists who spoke with our correspondent also alleged that the wave of money extortion is affecting their businesses and impeding free movement.

Security forces across the country have repeatedly complained about low salary and lack of incentives.

Some members of the Joint Security who didn't want to be identified said money extorted from drivers and passengers are used to feed themselves and pay rentals, while they send the balance to their bosses, who have interest in them and assign them to various checkpoints.

Some of the checkpoints in Nimba County report 15,000 Liberian Dollars monthly to their bosses in Sanniquellie, the provincial capital.

Security agencies assigned at



situation they lament is affecting their movement as licensed commercial drivers.

"Brother, each of the checkpoints they will call the driver and demand for LRD200, and if you can't pay such money, you will not be allowed to pass such gate", they complained.

Speaking to reporters who visited the Luogatuo border recently, Lusine Toure, a commercial driver, narrated that at each of the 20 checkpoints along the route, they are required to pay huge amounts of

these checkpoints include the Liberia Drug Enforcement Agency, Liberia Fire and Rescue Service, the Police, the National Security Agency, and the Liberia Immigration Service, amongst others.

At the Luogatuo border with neighboring Ivory Coast, The NEW DAWN observed more than ten trucks loaded with red palm oil, leaving the Liberian side of the border into Ivory Coast without any payment by inspectors from the Liberia Revenue Authority, and the Ministry of Commerce and industry assigned there. Editing by Jonathan Browne

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# Boakai's vision unrealistic

Liberia's immediate past ruling party, the Coalition for Democratic Change (CDC) says President Joseph Nyumah Boakai's vision ARREST is nothing more than an unrealistic campaign sloganeering.

example, President Boakai is inheriting 222.7 million US Dollars in the net international reserve," the party contended. It also claimed that President Boakai is inheriting over US\$40 million in the consolidated account as of January 17, 2023. Meanwhile, represented the highest amount of revenue collected in contemporary Liberia; While serving as Vice President of this republic, his government never got close to this amount of revenue actualized."The opposition party said the ruling Unity Party government, at the close of 2017, allegedly concealed several domestic debts, including USD 107 million from the IMF through the CBL.

It also cited USD 65 million from commercial banks, among others, and wilfully failed to recognize these debts as part of the domestic debt stock.

"This represented a gross understatement of debt stock. Of the 2.2 billion debt stock reported, about 60% was contracted under the Unity Party regime," the CDC alleged.

Regarding agriculture, the CDC explained that during the campaign, then Candidate Boakia prided himself as the Agriculture Czar and could use agriculture for immediate economic revitalization and social transformation. But it alleged that on the contrary, while addressing the Legislature in his State of the Nation, President Boakai offered nothing new.

The CDC claimed that President Boakai also did not provide any specific strategy for agriculture growth except that he provided a vague vision of "strengthening collaboration with international partners and local farmers to improve production."

"How such will be achieved or will achieve growth is left to the imagination of Liberians and our partners alike," the CDC continued. As for President Boakai's legislative agenda, the CDC noted that the President seems to have forgotten that many of the bills he seeks to propose as a pillar of his legislative agenda were already submitted to the previous National Legislature.

"The CDC offers its support in this regard to ensure those bills, of which it is the progenitor, are passed," it noted.



Pres. Boakai

CDC Chair Mulbah Morlu

The CDC responded to Amb. Boakai's first State of the Nation Address (SONA) on Monday evening, 29 January 2024, hours after the president addressed the nation before a joint legislative session.

The CDC claimed that the vision is built on impracticality, vagueness, and dishonesty.

"The President of Liberia while addressing the legislators unveiled a vision he termed as ARREST," the party said. "Clearly, without mentioning how this vision may be implemented or paid for, and lacking strategy and specification for its implementation, is nothing more than an unrealistic campaign sloganeering."The CDC believes that the entire address by President Boakai was high on bland clichés, bereft of even the rudimentary ingredients for a sound legislative agenda, falling short of substantive economic or transformative details. Contrary to President Boakai's report that the 'State of the Nation is in distress,' the CDC insisted that it left the state of the nation stronger than it met it in 2018. "For

President Boakai has indicated that the facts at the Central Bank of Liberia do not agree with the alleged US\$40m claim by the CDC regime.

The ex-ruling party however argued that this amount was left behind by the CDC government compared to the under 7 million the CDC inherited when it took power from the Sirleaf/Boakai-led government in 2017. "The CDC is appalled that even at this early stage, President Boakai would seek to mislead the public about the financial situation of our country by disputing the figures quoted by former President Weah during his farewell statement on 21st January 2024 which are available," the CDC noted. It challenged President Boakai to publish the statement of the consolidated account of the period within 48 hours or the CDC will make public copies of the same.

On the question of his comments on the budget deficit, the CDC stated that the fiscal year 2023 budget was recast after actual revenue collection amounted to USD 710 million was achieved.

"This actual collection

# Justice Minister-designate Kruah in US\$58,814.08 fraud

By Lincoln G. Peters

Liberia's Justice Minister-designate, Cllr. Cooper W. Kruah, is hooked in a US\$58,814.08 refund, as mandated by the Grievance and Ethic Committee of the Supreme Court of Liberia for unethical and criminal actions after he allegedly defrauded a Liberian-owned company, Mano River Rehabilitation and Development Corporation (MARDCO).

MARDCO, a company operating in the agriculture sector was established on September 18, 2006, by a group of Liberians who acquired fifty thousand acres of undeveloped farmland in Bong County, Liberia for the cultivation of rice, cocoa, coffee, and oil palm production. The company also extended to neighboring Sierra Leone where it owns virgin rubber plantation, ready for production.

A NewDawn's investigation establishes that Cllr. Kruah, the man designated as government's chief prosecutor and attorney general was found guilty and liable by the Grievance and Ethics Committee for theft, in

to enable them meet their livelihood and obligations.

Kruah was hired between 2009-2012 to serve as lawyer for MARDCO in a case with Mr. Edmondo Trombetta in Liberia.

Our investigation further uncovers that the former Posts and Telecommunications Minister from the Weah administration, allegedly received on behalf of the institution a total sum of one hundred eight thousand, nine hundred forty-one and sixty-five cent United States dollars (US\$ 108,941.65) from proceeds of MARDCO Rubber from Sierra Leone that was confiscated and sold in Liberia by the Civil Law Court.

Kruah allegedly and unauthorizedly deducted fifty-eight thousand, eight hundred fourteen United States dollars and eight cents (58,814.08) from the total amount of one hundred eight thousand nine hundred forty-one dollars sixty-five cent (108,941.65uSd) from money owned by MARDCO for his personal use.

Mr. Edgar S. Sydney, Chief Executive Officer of the Manor River Agriculture Rehabilitation



violation of Rule 15 of the Code of Moral and Professional Ethics of lawyers in Liberia.

MARDCO laments the act by Cllr. Kruah has caused serious embarrassment to its continuous operation both in Liberia and Sierra Leone due to incapability to settle financial obligations with citizens and landowners in Sierra Leone, who had worked hard and expected their monies

and Development Corporation (MARDCO) on June 12, 2020, wrote former Justice Minister Cllr. Frank Musa Dean and former President George M. Weah, on January 18, 2019, and February 24, 2020, respectively as well as former Chief Justice Francis Korkpor and current Chief Justice Sie-A-Nyene Yuoh, seeking their interventions in the matter.

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# McGill embraces war,

will get on payroll.

He did not elaborate on why. But McGill noted that there are teachers who have been teaching for many years but have not gotten on the payroll. He said as chairman of the committee, he will work along with the chairperson on Education at the House of Representatives on this concern.

According to him, the joint committee will go to the length and breadth of the

country to visit schools and meet with County Education Officers and the District Education Officers to identify the problems and work on them. McGill noted that his committee will make sure that teachers are paid based on their qualifications. He also stated that when people are underpaid or are not paid at all, they feel reluctant to teach and the children will not be given quality education.

"The Private sector is small

and expensive; everyone cannot afford to send their children to private schools, so let's make the public schools [an] area for quality learning," said McGill.

The Margibi senator noted that because of his love and belief in education, his colleagues voted him to chair such a committee. He also boasted that 52,000 citizens of Margibi County voted for him to serve them while he was being sanctioned.

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## McGill embraces war, economic crimes court

By Ethel A. Tweh

Ex-President George Manneh Weah's sanctioned former Minister of State, now Margibi County Senator Nathaniel McGill has endorsed the establishment of

\$5 million United States Dollars at my mother's grave. Let the Economic Crimes Court come and let the people of Liberia find the money to where it is hidden," he said. McGill was serving as ex-President Weah's

about candidates' records and have even elected former warlords and suspects of economic crimes, among others.

In his inaugural address on 22 January 2024, President Joseph Nyumah Boakai said an office would be set up to explore the feasibility of the establishment of a war and economic crimes court.

Meanwhile, Mr. McGill has welcomed the establishment of a War and Economic Crimes Court because he wants to be investigated to know if he is corrupt or not.

"I am preparing to declare my assets. The Liberian people feel I have never worked before, so they think that's their money I stole," said McGill.

He challenged an allegation that he has a house in Dubai, calling on his accusers to bring proof of the house. McGill said he would turn the house over to the Liberian government if it is proven that he has it in Dubai. In another development, Mr. McGill, the Senate Committee Chairman on Education said about six thousand volunteer teachers



Sen. Nathaniel McGill

a war and economic crimes court in Liberia. McGill told journalists Tuesday, 30 January 2024 that the court will enable him to prove his innocence in an allegation of corruption levied against him by the United States government.

McGill is also concerned about clearing his name on allegations that he allegedly buried US\$5 million in his mother's grave. "The Liberian people said I buried

Minister of State for Presidential Affairs when he and other senior officials were placed under U.S. sanctions for corruption.

But he got elected to the Senate along with his sanctioned colleague, Bill Tweahway, former National Port Authority Managing Director. A lot of Liberian voters are less concerned

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