

UN FOCUS



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No Longer Heavily Indebted

**NEC Announces Key Dates
for 2011 Elections**

New Offices for the Legislature



Message from the Special Representative of the Secretary-General

reduce its troops from 15,000 to about 8,000. However, in order to enable UNMIL to successfully further reduce the number of peacekeepers in the Country and hand over security responsibilities to the Liberian institutions, it is important to ensure that vital gaps in Liberia's security architecture are plugged as soon as possible. It is equally important to pinpoint how the Government – with support from UN agencies and donors – could in the future take over vital tasks and activities that are currently carried out by UN peacekeepers.

In order to plan and prepare the UNMIL transition process successfully, a three-day workshop on security transition planning, facilitated by the Conflict Prevention and Peace Forum, took place in Monrovia from 28 to 30 June. Invited expert speakers shared key lessons and strategies from transitions in Burundi, Kosovo, Sierra Leone and Timor Leste. The workshop put forward a number of useful recommendations on how to conduct transition planning. These recommendations include the need to prioritise and support Security Sector Reform as a basis for successful transition, the need to ensure that transition planning is Government led, the need to include civil society and key stakeholders in the process and the need to communicate with the population at large in order to calm any potential fears. I was particularly pleased with the outcome of the workshop which witnessed a very strong commitment by the senior officials of the Liberian Government to take ownership of the security of this Country. They will of course continue to rely on the UN and also require the assistance of the in-

ternational community to ensure that the Liberian security institutions can operate independently.

In the last edition of this magazine, I had underlined the importance of the 2011 elections and called on all concerned to work without any further delay towards the finalization of an electoral framework. I am therefore pleased to note the passage of such a bill and the announcement by the National Elections Commission (NEC) of the electoral timetable for 2011 elections. The UN and other international partners will continue to support NEC to ensure free, fair and hitch free elections that represent the will of the Liberian people.

As highlighted in the Twenty-first Progress Report of the Secretary-General, although Liberia continues to make significant progress in consolidating its peace and security, challenges remain. It is therefore crucial that the development of the security sector becomes a main priority for the Government and the international community, so that these institutions become independently operational and are sufficiently resourced.

I will be travelling to New York this September to formally present the Secretary-General's Progress Report and brief the Council members on the activities of the Mission and the updates on the developments in the Country. My message to the Security Council will be to persevere with Liberians, because although we are not there yet, we have plans developed by our Liberian partners to ensure durable peace and sustainable recovery, for which they need a little more time and donor support.

As Liberians peacefully celebrated the Country's 163rd Independence anniversary last 26 July, they displayed optimism and confidence in the nation's continuing progress towards a durable peace and a successful transition. They have a lot to be proud of. The Country has witnessed almost 7 years of unbroken peace; the longest in decades. The world community congratulates the Liberian nation for the achievements.

Liberian Government should also be congratulated for reaching the "completion point" under the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) Initiative that has led to a debt relief of US\$4.6 billion. This achievement has removed a millstone around the neck of all Liberians, and opened new avenues for credit and investment from international institutions for the much needed development projects in the Country.

Over the past three years, the peace process in Liberia has made tremendous progress which had enabled UNMIL to

Ellen Margrethe Løj
Special Representative of the Secretary-General and
Coordinator of United Nations Operations in Liberia



4. No Longer Heavily Indebted

Liberia benefits from one of the largest debt write-offs in history with the country reaching HIPC "completion point" in June, qualifying for US\$ 4.6 billion debt cancellation and opening up new avenues for the war-ravaged nation to mobilize resources to rebuild the country. The colossal debt was the legacy of decades-long poor governance that drew the country into a 14-year civil war.



6. NEC Announces Key Dates for 2011 Elections

The National Elections Commission of Liberia (NEC) announces the timetable for the 2011 presidential and legislative elections, touted as the litmus test for Liberia's peace consolidation and nascent democracy.



12. New Offices for the Legislature

UNMIL hands over four offices, refurbished and equipped by the Quick Impact Projects, to the National Legislature to enhance its ability in drafting laws by both the Houses.

4. No Longer Heavily Indebted
6. NEC Announces Key Dates for 2011 Elections
8. Training for Rule of Law
10. U + Police = Safe Liberia
12. New Offices for the Legislature
14. Liberia Launches Plan to Combat HIV/AIDS
16. "Rape is Everybody's Business"
18. Liberian Women Speak Up
20. Raising Women's Voice
22. Bypass Route at Paynesville Red Light
24. 'Home Calling' Concert
26. Finding New Homes
28. Greening the Blue
30. Liberians Speak



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No Longer Heavily In

Despite being a small country of about 3.4 million people and with a meagre US\$ 350 million annual budget (2009-2010), Liberia owed the international community a staggering US\$4.9 billion debt making the tiny West African nation one of the world's Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC). This colossal debt was largely the legacy of the decades-long poor governance that drew the country into a brutal, 14-year civil war that ended in 2003.

After prolonged efforts by the post-war government of President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf that came to power in 2006, the heavy burden of the massive debt has been lifted from Liberia's shoulders. In June this year, the two Washington-based financial institutions - the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank - announced that Liberia had successfully completed all steps for the country's debt to be written off.

"To settle that US\$4.9 billion debt, we would have had to pay our creditors our entire budget for 28 years," explained President Sirleaf as she announced the debt cancellation of US\$ 4.6 billion to the nation. The World Bank and IMF say Liberia had reached HIPC "completion point" after only two years and three months and would benefit from one of the largest debt write-offs in history, over 90 per cent of the money the country owed.

"Today is a great day for Liberia," said the ecstatic Liberian leader. She said previous governments had borrowed from the World Bank, IMF, other countries, and companies, and had not paid back any of the loans. "Since the 1980 coup d'état, followed by our 14-year civil war, none of our loans were serviced, and so the interest and the penalties grew and grew."

Pointing out that the debt was an "unbearable burden" that was holding back the country's recovery and development, President Sirleaf, a former World Bank employee, said for the debts to be written off, the World Bank and the IMF had



debted

Economic activities are picking up in Liberia



prescribed “tough medicine which we had to swallow, but which enabled us to better manage our economy and our finances.”

She said despite the hardships, coming during a global economic and financial recession, they kept the economy stable. “We attracted private investment; we passed a new law to govern our budget; we provided health services and made sure teachers and civil servants got paid on time; we made government budget and accounts more transparent; we supported the activities of the General Auditing Commission and the Anti-Corruption Commission; and we began tackling poverty through our Poverty Reduction Strategy. Because of the way we tightened our belts and conducted ourselves, by not borrowing from anybody and spending only the revenues we collected, including your taxes, the World Bank and the IMF have just announced that we don’t have to pay them back,” explained a very happy Presi-

airs, the Central Bank of Liberia and other eminent Liberians who contributed to the financial reform. “Like someone who has toted a heavy load for many miles, we can now cast it off, straighten our backs and lift our eyes to the horizon where a better day is breaking – a day when we will stand on our own, unsupported, and proud.”

“Liberia can now mobilize additional resources to rebuild the road network and the electricity supply system, providing the infrastructure needed to allow economic growth, while continuing to expand the health care and education systems,” said IMF mission chief for Liberia Chris Lane. For his part, World Bank Country Director Ishac Diwan noted: “Liberian authorities are building a credible track record for implementing economic and governance reforms. Debt relief will support the continuation of these efforts.”

Although the government owes a huge domestic loan accrued over the years,

“Liberia can now mobilize additional resources to rebuild the road network and the electricity supply system, providing the infrastructure needed to allow economic growth, while continuing to expand the health care and education systems,”

dent Sirleaf.

Although Liberia is no longer heavily indebted, the Liberian leader said the country’s debt is not yet over. “We have to go before another institution, the Paris Club, to ask them to cancel the rest of our debt.” She also highlighted efforts she had made for Kuwait to clear a loan of US\$6.7 million which was signed 32 years ago for road construction but which has now grown to US\$12 million.

President Sirleaf pointed out that the peace Liberia has been enjoying over the past seven years coupled with other measures led the world’s leading financial institutions to declare Liberia trustworthy. “In reaching the HIPC completion, we are indebted to many institutions and people: our international partners, our creditors, our supporters. I thank them, and am confident that they will continue to be Liberia’s friend, going forward.” She acknowledged the role of the Ministry of Finance and the Ministry of Planning and Economic Af-

many Liberians have commended the government on the debt relief but maintain that accountability and transparency must be ensured in public offices. “The debt relief is indicative that the country is on good footing for economic recovery,” observed Cllr. Augustine Toe, the executive director of Liberia’s Catholic Justice and Peace Commission, pointing out that future loans should be within the country’s capacity to repay and should be used in the productive sector. “We should be very strategic with loans and not put unnecessary burden on generations yet unborn.”

The HIPC programme was launched in 1996 in acknowledgement of the fact that excessive debt was undermining the development prospects of poor countries. Liberia is the 29th country to reach the “completion point”.

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NEC Announces Key Dates



The seven commissioners of the National Elections Commission. Chairman James Fromayan (in the middle) addresses the press.

Charged with the onerous task of handling the most crucial process in Liberia's post-conflict era, the Board of Commissioners of the National Elections Commission (NEC) has announced the official timetable for the conduct of the 2011 presidential and legislative elections with Election Day set for October 11, 2011. However, NEC Chairman James Fromayan says the key electoral dates would be subject to changes depending on future developments.

Key dates Fromayan announced included the official launch of the voters' registration exercise on August 27, 2010; while the actual voters' registration runs from January 10 through February 6, 2011. From April 4-10, 2011, there will be the exhibition of the provisional registration roll while candidates' nominations are scheduled to take place from July 5-23, 2011.

On August 18, 2011, the final list of candidates will be published and political

campaign period will span from August 18 to October 9, 2011. Polling day is set for October 11, 2011.

Liberia's Constitution requires that presidential and legislative elections be held every six years. The last elections were held in October 2005 and were largely overseen by the UN Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) and other international partners. Out of a field of 21 other contestants, Unity Party's standard bearer Ellen Johnson Sirleaf emerged victorious after a run-off with soccer legend and the 1995 FIFA Best Player George Weah of the Congress for Democratic Change.

Already, incumbent president Johnson Sirleaf has declared her intention to seek re-election; while 2005 presidential runner-up George Weah says he too will contest the forthcoming elections.

At a news conference recently, Fromayan said the NEC has already begun preparations for the conduct of free, fair and transparent 2011 presidential and legislative elections thus lying to rest its

position on the "controversial" Joint Resolution passed by the National Legislature on July 22, 2010, and signed into law by the Liberian President. The Threshold Bill had lingered at the National Legislature for nearly two years; on two occasions vetoed by the Liberian President citing grave financial implications and constitutional violation.

The National Legislature instead approved a Joint Resolution not to use the census results to prescribe a threshold for constituency representation but rather opted to retain the 64 seats currently existing at the House of Representatives as well as create nine additional seats. The Joint Resolution did not also include a threshold as provided for in Article 80 d and e of the Liberian Constitution.

The Constitutional provision mandates the National Legislature to prescribe a threshold for electoral constituency representation in the House of Representatives following the conduct of a national census every ten years. It grants authority to the

ates for 2011 Elections

NEC to demarcate electoral constituencies consistent with national census figures. A census conducted in March 2008 for the first time in 24 years put Liberia's population at 3.4 million.

Though now law, the Joint Resolution has since received widespread criticism from some segments of civil society and Liberians in the Diaspora on grounds that it is illegal. Already, some civil society institutions have filed a Writ of Prohibition to the Supreme Court to prevent the NEC from executing the Joint Resolution signed into law by President Johnson Sirleaf.

However, Fromayan informed journalists recently that the Commission has put in place the necessary mechanism for delineation of electoral districts across the country, a process that will take place following the voter registration exercise.

Had the National Legislature provided a threshold, these activities would have been in the reverse – the delineation of electoral districts across the country would have preceded the voters' registration exercise. However, the NEC Chairman assured Liberians that the delineation exercise will be consistent with internationally accepted standards and practices.

On apportioning the additional seats provided for in the Joint Resolution, the NEC Chairman disclosed that the distribution of the nine additional seats is based on the percentage of seats currently occupied by the six most populated counties. "Montserrado County with existing 14 seats will have three additional seats thereby increasing the number of seats to 17; Nimba County will have two additional seats thereby increasing the number of seats to nine; Bong County will have one additional seat thereby increasing the number of seats to seven; and Grand Bassa, Margibi and Lofa Counties with existing four seats each will have one additional seat each," Fromayan said.

According to Fromayan, a voter registration plan is being scrupulously developed on the basis of geographical planning and harmonized data. "The process will be

based on the lowest possible geographical and administrative unit, meaning that voters will use the same voters' registration card for subsequent by-elections, as well as the planned 2013 local government elections and possibly beyond," he pointed out. He assured that international best practices, which require consultations with the locals, would be used by NEC to carry out the delimitation exercise.

The operational plan for the 2011 general and presidential elections has been produced with support of the Liberian Government and development partners including the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL), United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the European Union (EU), and the United States Agency for International Development (USAID).

Unlike the 2005 presidential and legislative elections, the upcoming 2011 elections will be led by the NEC. The UN Security Council has mandated UNMIL to provide NEC logistical support within

its capacity to facilitate access to remote areas during the elections, coordinate international support for the elections and support Liberian institutions and political parties in creating a favourable atmosphere for the elections.

Already, the Liberian Government and the NEC, in collaboration with the country's development partners, have together unveiled a roadmap for the smooth conduct of the electoral proceedings at an estimated cost of US\$39.3 million.

The project aims to support building the operational and professional capacity of the NEC and key exercises of the electoral process including boundary limitation, voter registration, civic/voter education, domestic observation and women's participation. It will also support NEC's relations with political parties and the legislature, training for security, and legal counsel.

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KEY ELECTORAL DATES FOR 2011 ELECTIONS

DATE	ACTIVITY
November 01, 2009 – March 31, 2011	Registration of Political Parties and Independent Candidates
August 27, 2010	Official Launch of the Voter Registration Exercise
September 24, 2010	Official Civic Voter Education campaign on Voter Registration Process Launched
October 01 – November 1, 2010	Accreditation of Party Agents, Media and Observers for the Voter Registration process
December 10, 2010	List of Registration Centres finalized and published
January 10 – February 6, 2011	VOTER REGISTRATION
February 7 – 17, 2011	Objections and Appeals heard and determined for Voter Registration
April 04-10, 2011	EXHIBITION OF PROVISIONAL REGISTRATION ROLL
April 11 – May 1, 2011	Hearing, Inquiry and Appeal Process
April 27, 2011	Civic Voter Education on Elections Launched
May 05, 2011	Issuance of Writ of Elections
May 24 – June 12, 2011	Public Consultation on Electoral Districts
July 05 – July 23, 2011	CANDIDATE NOMINATION
July 25 – August 14, 2011	Objections and Appeals Heard and Determined
August 18, 2011	Final List of Candidates Published
August 18 – October 9, 2011	POLITICAL CAMPAIGN PERIOD
September 18, 2011	Arrival of Ballot Paper in Monrovia
October 11, 2011	ELECTION DAY
**** These Key Dates are subject to change depending on future developments	

Training for Rule of Law



The first casualty of a civil conflict is rule of law, and re-establishing it is the best indication that things are back on track, says Deputy Special Representative for Rule of Law Henrietta Mensa-Bonsu. Although Liberia has made significant progress since the end of the 14-year civil war, with continuing occurrences of ritualistic killings, sexual and gender based violence, and mob violence during which even police stations had been attacked and torched, Liberian President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf names rule of law as one of the critical challenges still

society.

The three main divisions under the UNMIL Rule of Law include Human Rights, Legal and Judicial System Support Division and Corrections. In supporting Liberia's Security Sector Reform, UNMIL has built and rehabilitated several rule of law structures through its Quick Impact Projects. The Mission has also supported the training of more than 3,800 personnel of the new Liberia National Police, including the Emergency Response Unit and the Police Support Unit.

Due to the weaknesses in the country's criminal justice system, 85 per cent of

Due to the weaknesses in the country's criminal justice system, 85 per cent of the prisoner population is in pre-trial detention, which in itself is a human rights issue.

facing the post-war nation.

The UN Mission in Liberia has been involved in the rule of law sector with training as one of its core activities. "We work with all the rule of law institutions: police, corrections, immigration, the courts, the ministry of justice -- the rule of law sector is an integrated sector; each side impact upon the other," says Mensa-Bonsu, a former professor of law. Over the years, the Mission has contributed to the development of the strategic plans of the Judiciary and the Ministry of Justice. Furthermore, UNMIL maintains collaborative working relationship with representatives of the national legal and judicial institutions, international partners and the civil

the prisoner population is in pre-trial detention, which in itself is a human rights issue. Prison breaks are not uncommon, some of which had been violent. To address these issues, the Mission's Corrections Advisory Unit has contributed to the recruitment, training and development of corrections personnel to ensure safe staffing levels and professionalism at Correction facilities. Similar support in terms of training has been extended to the Bureau of Immigration and Naturalization.

"We have a mandate to assist the Government of Liberia train judges, magistrates, clerks of courts, the judiciary and to assist in the training of prosecutors, attorneys for the ministry of justice," says



Boma Jack, head of Legal Education and Training Unit. The Mission also collaborates with the Law school to develop its curriculum in addition to working with the Liberia Bar Association. UNMIL has provided training for 336 magistrates, 220 Justices of the Peace, 226 prosecutors, 146 Clerks of Magisterial Courts, 45 Clerks of Circuit Courts and 1,000 Immigration Officers. The Mission is also engaged in seminars, meetings and workshops for the education and sensitization of the public on their rights and on legal reform initiatives.

UNMIL's Human Rights and Protection Section works with national institutions and CSOs, including non-governmental organizations, to ensure the promotion, protection and monitoring of human rights in all 15 counties of Liberia. As building the capacity of Liberian authorities and civil society is vital for sustainable human rights promotion and

ing. In July this year, UNMIL funded a three-day training for 28 participants from CSOs from 14 counties on the theme: "Improving the efficiency, professionalism, independence and impact of Civil Society Organizations in human rights monitoring, reporting and advocacy in Liberia."

Commenting on "access to justice", Liberia's Minister of Justice Christiana Tah says the overwhelming number of Liberians do not think the formal justice system was meeting their needs probably as a result of their [low level of] education and legal complexities. She echoes the need for public education. UNMIL Radio sensitizes the public on rule of law issues through programmes such as "Community Court."

As Liberia strives to re-establish the rule of law, Mensa-Bonsu points out that even most advanced countries are still struggling and worrying about things like law enforcement, fair trials, and delays in



UNMIL personnel facilitate rule of law training



Reiterating that effective law enforcement is necessary to achieve a steady state of security and sustainable peace, the UN Special Representative Ellen Margrethe Løj, says UNMIL, together with its international partners, remains steadfast in supporting the Liberia National Police to be fully and independently capable of tackling law enforcement challenges.

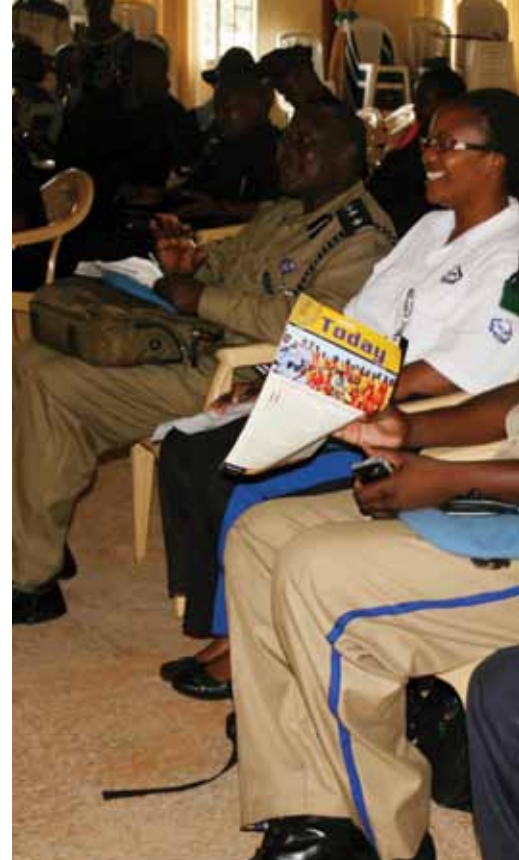
protection, the Section includes capacity building in all its activities.

In collaboration with the United Nations Development Programme, UNMIL has organized training in Gbarnga, Bong County, for 29 participants from 15 Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) involved in the rule of law sector. For the participants who need to prepare effective proposals at a time when donors are demanding that transparency and accountability mechanisms be incorporated in projects, the capacity building workshop on Project Proposal Writing and Management was more than welcome. Kamudoni Nyasulu, the Director of the Mission's Legal and Judicial System Support Division, says the workshop was held as a response to the inability of CSOs to prepare effective project proposals that would attract donor fund-

trials. "All of those things that we are grappling with here are on the agenda of every country. It is only the degree -- rule of law is a work in progress in every country," she points out, adding: "The challenge is not just to build the institutions but to make it possible for the public to have enough faith and confidence to use the institutions."

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U + Police = Safe Life

Having grown up fearing the police, Massa Fahnbulleh, currently the town chief of Kanga in Grand Cape Mount County, is delighted to learn that the police are in fact people's friends and partners, and not their enemy. "Since I was growing up, I had always been told that you have to be afraid of the police, that the policeman is not your friend," the middle-aged Liberian woman shared her experience at a community policing (CP) training seminar for community leaders and police, adding that before, even when someone had vital information for the police about crime, the person will be afraid to report it.

However, by participating in the ongoing intensive nationwide CP sensitization campaign which was officially launched in New Kru Town community in Liberia's capital Monrovia in late April, Fahnbulleh says by working with the Liberian National Police (LNP) and identifying secu-

rity risks such as ghettos and drug abuse, crime has reduced in their community. "We used to have a serious problem with drugs in our town; we realized that whenever the youth took drugs they became uncontrollable; they lacked respect for elders and committed various crimes. But

cannot fight crime in isolation of the communities. Police personnel say they cannot be everywhere at once and point out that all citizens have a social responsibility to actively participate in CP activities and decision making which affect their security. The nationwide awareness campaign

Before UNMIL began training a new police force with UNPOL playing a key technical role, many Liberians admit that they feared the police because of its human rights abuses and corrupt practices which eroded the trust and confidence of the public.

because of community policing, we have been able to get rid of ghettos and drugs."

As Liberia consolidates peace and stability after years of carnage, security still remains a major concern for many citizens. Liberia's Inspector-General of Police Marc Amblard acknowledges that police

under the theme: "The police: my friend, my partner, my security" is led by the LNP assisted by the UN Police (UNPOL) and is supported by the UN Peacebuilding Fund through the United Nations Development Programme in Liberia.

Before UNMIL began training a new



Community policing training seminar in Paynesville

beria

police force with UNPOL playing a key technical role, many Liberians admit that they feared the police because of its human rights abuses and corrupt practices which eroded the trust and confidence of the public. Patricia Jallah-Scott, the project officer of the UNDP/Community Security and Social Cohesion under the Peacebuilding Fund, says the objective of CP is to adopt a problem solving multi-sectoral approach which pays more emphasis on addressing the root causes of crime as opposed to the traditional law enforcement strategies which tend to address only their symptoms. Against this backdrop, community leaders, marketers, religious leaders, political leaders, traditional leaders, elders, youths and students are all being encouraged to help make Liberia a safer place to live. “U + Police = Safe Liberia” is one sensitization message.

During CP meetings, communities highlight their security challenges and together with the LNP, they find means of

addressing them rather than the police telling them what could be the best practice as in the past. The meetings give community members the opportunity to also air out their concerns -- one of which is the need for the police to protect the identity of informants and not disclose it to suspected criminals. Community Policing leaders are further educated on the establishment and function of the Professional Standards Division of the LNP where complaints of police misconduct can now be reported.

“Training of community leaders and police officers is part of the community policing sensitization,” explains Ramil Bergado, officer-in-charge of UNMIL

police say all persons accused of crime are presumed innocent until proven guilty in a court of law. “We want to encourage all peace loving and responsible citizens of Liberia to join hands with the police in making Liberia safe. The safety and security of your community is also your business,” maintains Christiana Tah, Minister of Justice and Attorney General.

The first phase of the ongoing UNDP-supported community policing project which ends this coming December has provided 15 motorbikes to the LNP that are intended for patrol in high crime areas as well as three vehicles. Some police stations also will be renovated. Although

Before UNMIL began training a new police force with UNPOL playing a key technical role, many Liberians admit that they feared the police because of its human rights abuses and corrupt practices which eroded the trust and confidence of the public.

Community Policing Advisory Team. Trainings in CP, which usually follow sensitization exercises, have been conducted in Montserado, Grand Bassa, Bong, Grand Cape Mount, Margibi and Lofa counties despite the challenges posed by deplorable roads and unfriendly weather. In July, CP training was conducted in crime-prone Paynesville on the outskirts of Monrovia during which “the significance of gender in community policing” was among topics discussed. Members of the community are also sensitized against mob violence. The

practiced in other parts of the world as part of modern policing, the concept of CP was only introduced in post-war Liberia by the United Nations Mission in 2004 and adopted by the LNP as one way of contributing to durable peace and security. “If community policing can help to make our town crime free and peaceful, I believe the same can happen in other communities,” says Fahnbulleh.

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New Offices for the

The Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary-General (DSRSG) for Rule of Law, Henrietta Mensa-Bonsu has handed over four refurbished and equipped offices to the leadership of the 52nd National Legislature for use of the Legislative Drafting Section to enhance its ability in drafting legislations for both Houses of the 1st branch of government. Through funds of the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) Quick Impact Projects (QIPs) scheme, these offices have been outfitted with furniture, equipment and internet connectivity.

At the turning over ceremony, the Deputy UN Envoy said in a country still recovering following years of conflict, the Legislature's role cannot be underestimated and it's essential that its responsibilities in the lawmaking process are carried out

effectively. "Not only must laws enacted by the Legislature promote peace, reconciliation and good governance, they must be drafted in such a way that the intentions of the elected representatives of the people of Liberia are clear and not open to misinterpretation," she pointed out. "The Legislature has a role in ensuring that draft legislation is reviewed appropriately and passed in a timely manner, so as to encourage and promote necessary reforms and advance the interests of the people of Liberia."

Mensa-Bonsu noted that it is for this reason that the UN family is supporting and will continue to support the Legislature and other branches of Government with initiatives to build institutional and operational capacity.

The four offices turned over are just one element of assistance which the UN family has provided the National Legis-

lature. Discussions initiated between the leadership of both Houses and UNMIL dates back to February 2008. Following a capacity assessment and two consultative forums – jointly convened by the Legislature Modernization Strategy Committee and the UN, and in consonance with the Legislature's Strategic Plan – the Legislative Drafting Section, Research Bureau, Archive and Library were identified as those sections in need of immediate support.

A consolidated project proposal for US\$1.2 million was developed for presentation to donors which has been endorsed by both Houses and supported by the Bureau of National Archives, Ministry of Foreign Affairs Archives, the Liberia Institute of Public Administration (LIPA), the National Bar Association and the University of Liberia.

UNMIL, in collaboration with the



Senate Pro-Tempore Wotorson & Deputy Speaker Mulbah logging on the new computers as colleagues and guests look on

Legislature

United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the UN Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the United Kingdom Department for International Development (DFID), identified funding and three capacity building programmes were undertaken. In early 2009 two legislative staff underwent a seven-week training in Legislative Drafting at the United Kingdom-Royal Institute of Public Administration (UK-RIPA). In December 2009 an intensive two-week legislative drafting training programme was conducted by Roger Rose of the UK-RIPA, convened at the LIPA in Monrovia and included 21 participants from the Legislative and Executive branches of government as well as UNMIL, UNDP, UNICEF. Earlier this year, the Director of the Legislative Research Bureau benefitted from a three-month training in London, United Kingdom, in Research Methodology.

Currently, UNMIL and other partners are in discussion with international partners to secure funding for the recruitment of both a local and foreign consultant to mentor the newly trained legislative draftsmen and women and determine additional capacity development needs.

Besides, the Human and Civil Rights and Judicial Committees of the House of Representatives and the Senate Judiciary Committee have benefitted from joint technical cooperation sessions with UNMIL's Human Rights and Protection Section providing committee members the opportunity to develop skills to ensure that Liberian laws are in conformity with human rights treaties.

Discussions have begun with LIPA and the Institute of Research and Population Studies at the University of Liberia to design special training modules for capacity building of staff of the Legislative Re-

search Bureau.

Mensa-Bonsu has encouraged all recipients of these capacity-building initiatives to make full use of the skills and knowledge they have been given the opportunity to acquire, and assist the country in its ongoing development efforts. "In doing so, they will help to establish good governance, which will, in turn, ensure peace, stability and economic development for Liberia," she said. She urged the Legislative Drafting Section to make good use of the new offices and equipment, ensure that they are utilized, duly maintained and appropriately cared for.

The Deputy Speaker of the House of Representatives, Tokpah Mulbah, noted that the turn-over of the offices came at the right moment because the National Legislature cannot continue to function with such impediments – the lack of Legislative Drafting and Research Sections – to assist them in their work. He said this is why he makes it his duty at every forum when given the opportunity to make remarks to ask the international partners to help them in this area. "That's the only way our Legislative work will be able to benefit the country and the National Legislature – by building the capacity of the Legislature. If we don't have the ways and means to enable us make laws, anything passed out there will have loopholes," Mulbah, also Bong County District #5 Representative, stressed. He thanked the UN for their support and hoped that the new facilities will benefit the National Legislature and the people of Liberia.

President Pro-Tempore of the Liberian Senate Cletus Wotorson said he was pleased that the National Legislature is in a way capacitated to handle Legislative drafting which has been lacking since the 52nd National Legislature assumed its work in January 2006.

The Grand Kru County Senior Senator noted that they are aware that their work cannot be effective in the absence of proper drafting, underpinned by significant research. He therefore expressed appreciation that the UN and other international partners have come to the aid of the National Legislature in providing the facilities and to ensure that the staffers are comfortable and can work effectively.

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Liberia Launches Plan

At the Monrovia City Hall in early August, Joe Joe Baysah sat at the high table together with senior Liberian government officials as the National AIDS Commission of Liberia launched the National HIV and AIDS Strategic Framework 2010-2014. While all at the high table are involved in the fight against HIV and AIDS, Baysah, who works with the UN Mission in Liberia and is president of Light Association, a network of people living with HIV, tested positive for HIV in 2002, and subsequent-

ly, openly declared his status.

“Those who are HIV positive and have come forward to say we are part of the solution are our heroes,” commended Dr. Edward McClain, Minister of State for Presidential Affairs, as he launched the National Strategic Framework on behalf of President Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf, who is also the Chair of the National AIDS Commission. The 2007 Liberia Demographic and Health Survey shows an HIV rate of 1.5 per cent among the general population aged between 15-49, indicating a low-level, generalized epidemic; however,

the HIV rate among women is higher (1.8 percent) than among men (1.2 percent), revealing women’s higher vulnerability to HIV infection. The Strategic Framework will provide guidance for planning and managing the AIDS response in Liberia. Experts say Liberia needs to increase the intensity and coverage of HIV prevention and care efforts to avert an epidemic.

“HIV presents a challenge that requires that we act with boldness and courage for if unchecked, it would undermine Liberia’s recovery and reconstruction efforts,” said Deputy Special Representative



DSRSG Henrietta Mensa-Bonsu makes remarks



Health Minister Dr. Gwenigale and Minister McClain at the launch.

HIV infections and Zero AIDS related deaths’.”

Sharing his country’s 14 per cent prevalence of HIV and AIDS, Dr. Ben Chirwa, Director General of the National AIDS Council of Zambia, said Liberia has

cial Welfare Dr. Walter Gwenigale. Key activities under the five-year Framework will involve improving the coverage and quality of existing prevention, care and treatment services, as well as strengthening the involvement of non-health govern-

“We can ensure that no baby is born with HIV in Liberia. Together with the Government of Liberia we can ensure that we attain the vision of ‘Zero Discrimination, Zero new HIV infections and Zero AIDS related deaths.’”

n to Combat HIV/AIDS

of the Secretary-General for Rule of Law, Henrietta Mensa-Bonsu, speaking on behalf of the UN Family. Pointing out that the UN Joint Program of Support on AIDS has been developed and that very soon the UN will be giving to the Government of Liberia its collective contributions to Liberia’s AIDS response, the deputy UN envoy noted that each year an estimated 200 babies are born with HIV in Liberia. “We can ensure that no baby is born with HIV in Liberia. Together with the Government of Liberia we can ensure that we attain the vision of ‘Zero Discrimination, Zero new

3,000 people on HIV treatment. “Zambia has 100 times the number.” He said in the beginning they were complacent about the challenge of AIDS until the son of the country’s first president, Kenneth Kaunda, died of the disease. “The challenge for us is not to wait until we have a national crisis,” he said. Dr. Ivan Camanor, National AIDS Commission Executive Director thanked the National Steering Committee of the National AIDS Strategic Framework that worked on the document for over three years. Among speakers at the event was the Minister of Health and So-

ment sectors, civil society and the private sector in efforts to prevent the spread of HIV and respond to its effects.

Baysah said the Light Association was part of the framework from its onset and encourages Liberians not to stigmatize against people living with the virus. “We all must come together to fight this disease,” he said. The UN Mission in Liberia has been involved in sensitizing the public throughout Liberia on ways to prevent HIV and AIDS.

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“Rape is Everybody’s Bu

Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict, Margot Wallström, has stressed that the scourge of rape must be rooted out in Liberia. She said sexual abuse destroys the fabric of social life in the village or in a nation and that there is a high cost to be paid in the long run.

During her visit to Liberia, Margot Wallström discussed the UN’s efforts in dealing with rape and other forms of sexual violence that women and girls contend

with during and after armed conflict. Although Liberia is a post-conflict country, the UN envoy told the press at the UN

of the high rate of sexual violence and rape in the country; why is it still the number one reported crime; what can be done to

“There is no excuse for sexual abuse. Girls have the right to their bodies, to choose their clothing, and they have a freedom of movement, it is their basic human rights,”

Mission’s headquarters in Monrovia at the end of her five-day visit that she came to Liberia to better understand the dynamics

prevent these crimes and how can her office contribute to strengthen the rule of law response, among other things. “You can’t



Business"

prevent what you don't fully understand. So we want to meet the survivors of sexual violence, also understand more about the perpetrators, and analyse how society deals with it. How can we better address this serious problem?" She pointed out that Liberia lacks forensic capacity which means people who commit rape can walk free as it will be very difficult to find evidence, and that could encourage impunity.

Making reference to a recent survey in Liberia in which many respondents blamed women for their victimization, Wallström,



"Today the challenge is to transition from what was total war fought also on the bodies of women and children to total peace in which women and children are left in peace and are left safe in their schools, home and market places." Margot Wallström

who stressed the importance of the media in public education, pointed out that the victims are not the criminals. She added that sexual abuse is not cultural or sexual but criminal. "This is not just a woman's issue, it is everybody's business." She dismissed argument of rampant sexual abuse as a result of improper dressing and wondered whether most of the victims of rape in Liberia who are children should be blamed for improper dressing.

The UN envoy said sexual violence was widespread during the Liberian conflict as a tool to terrorize, displace and control the civilian population which has left a heavy footprint on the society. "Today the challenge is to transition from what was total war fought also on the bodies of women and children to total peace in which women and children are left in peace and are left safe in their schools, home and market places," she said, reiterating that no society can reach its full potential unless women and children are involved. "We want Liberia to succeed but we need to stop this from

becoming a rampant phenomenon."

During her visit, Wallström held discussions with Special Representative of the Secretary-General Ellen Margrethe Løj and other senior officials of the UN; the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of Liberia, Johnnie N. Lewis; Minister of Gender and Development, Vabah Gayflor; the Inspector-General and officials of Liberia National Police; and Chief Prosecutor at the Sexual and Gender-Based Violence Crimes Unit of the Justice Ministry. She visited Criminal Court "E", the Peace Hut in Totota, Bong County, Phebe Hospital, and held an interactive meeting with national and international stakeholders working on Gender-Based Violence. Wallström's role has its roots in Security Council Resolution 1325 in relation to Women, Peace and Security, giving women a role in peace processes but also looking at sexual violence against women as a security issue.

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Liberian Women Sp



As member countries of the United Nations get set to mark the 10th anniversary of the UN Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1325 on peace and security for women, Liberian women peace leaders have presented a policy statement to the Special Representative of Secretary-General (SRSG) Ellen Margrethe Løj highlighting three areas of concern: sexual violence, peace-building, and security sector reforms, with proposed actions under each area required to promote and sustain peace and security in Liberia.

The policy statement issued by 20 Liberian women leaders during the “Global Open Day on 1325” at the Angie Brooks International Centre, University of Liberia Fendell Campus, urged the UN and the Liberian Government to recognize the role and contribution of Liberian women in the country’s peace process and provide adequate resources and opportunities for women’s full, equal and effective partici-

pation at all levels in conflict prevention, peace-building and conflict resolution.

The “Global Open Day on 1325”, facilitated by the UN Gender Theme Group as part of the United Nations system-wide commemoration of the Security Council Resolution 1325 on women, peace and security, provided a forum for Liberian women to air their views on how contemporary processes of conflict resolution and peace building can be enhanced through the integration of women’s concerns. A similar process took place in all UN peace-keeping missions. The outcome of all the dialogues will be communicated to the UN Security Council in October 2010 and will feed into the vision for the next ten years on how to better implement the resolution.

Highlighting the issue of sexual violence on behalf of her colleagues, president of Liberian Women Empowerment Network (LIWEN) Lovetta Warner demanded that “the UN invest its energy and mobilize the necessary resources to bring an end to sexual violence.” She then

proposed that the UN continue to support nationwide awareness raising programmes to stop sexual violence in Liberia; support and strengthen the justice sector institutions in all counties to improve women’s access to justice; support the government in strengthening its existing structures including Criminal Court “E”, the Sexual & Gender-based Violence (SGBV) Crimes Unit and the Women and Children Protection (WACPs) Unit of the Liberia National Police, among others.

Touching on “peace-building” on behalf of the women, the National Coordinator of Women in Peace-building Network (WIPNET), Lindora Howard-Diawara, advocated that the UN continue providing support to enhance women’s participation in peace building initiatives and ensure that those initiatives are fully aligned with women’s needs and concerns. In particular, they demanded that the UN system provide support to women to undertake activities on reconciliation including peer group discussions at all levels as a means

Peak Up



SRSB Løj and women peace leaders say “no” to rape.

to strengthen the healing process and improve community cohesion; provide support to augment community policing programmes and enhance women’s participation linking it to early warning systems and structures; provide increased support for civil society capacity building in the areas of documentation, research and gathering of best practices on conflict resolution; as well as provide financial support to long term programming and initiatives to include civic education on peace building at all levels; among others.

Lt. Geraldine George of the Armed Forces of Liberia (AFL), who touched on “Security Sector Reform” on behalf of the women, also demanded that “the UN provide support to and collaborate with the security sector institutions to ensure that the implementation of the Security Sector Reform is informed by the gender equality principles.” In that respect, she suggested that the UN assists the government to ensure that special measures are taken to achieve at least 30 per cent quota for

women within the security sector institutions; that the UN continue to advocate for sex-disaggregated data gathering and sharing exercises in the security sector institutions to monitor women’s increased enrolment in the sector; that the UN continue to engage with the government to review and revise policies and codes to ensure compliance with UNSCR 1325, and other international and national instruments on women’s rights, among others.

Presenting the policy statement, the Grand Bassa County Superintendent, who also chairs the Superintendent’s Council, Julia Duncan Cassell, reminded SRSB Løj that the women of Liberia are demanding that something be done to help them but stress what they are doing that will not only strengthen Liberian women but women in the region and the world.

In response, SRSB Løj, on behalf of the entire UN System in Liberia, said she was there to listen to the women and stressed that women’s peace and security is a precondition for overall sustainable development and as such of vital importance to Liberia. She urged Liberian women leaders to encourage young women to become engaged in the process to promote sustainable peace and security in the country and to enhance the implementation of UNSCR 1325. “It’s well that all of us of a certain age are deeply engaged with the issues; but it’s a special challenge for us to encourage young women to become engaged because they are going to carry the torch onward,” she pointed out adding, “We have so much work ahead of us and we will only succeed if we work jointly

together and involve the young men and women of Liberia.”

The UN Envoy informed the women leaders that the points raised during the dialogue were extremely relevant to the challenges in Liberia, and suggested that another forum be organized to specifically discuss the “security sector” further. She noted although challenges still exist in the sector, she reassured the forum that the UN and its partners are doing their utmost in addressing them. “I have no doubt that reconstruction, peace-building, and peace-keeping will not be sustainable unless sufficient attention is paid to how all sections of the population, and the women, can be fully incorporated,” the SRSB pointed out.

The UNSCR 1325 provides for increased participation and representation of women at all levels of decision-making; attention to specific protection needs of women and girls in conflict; gender perspective in post-conflict processes; gender perspective in UN programming, reporting and in Security Council missions; and gender perspective and training in UN peace support operations, among others.

Liberia launched its National Action Plan for implementing Resolution 1325 in March 2009, becoming the first African country to do so, at the International Colloquium on Women’s Empowerment, Leadership Development, International Peace and Security, which President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf co-convened with Finland’s President Tarja Halonen in Monrovia.

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Cllr. Rosemarie Banks James makes a point





Raising Women's

Liberia made history in 2004 by electing Africa's first ever female President. Now the country has launched its first women's radio, dedicated to raising the voices of women and increasing their access to information.

Located in the Congo Town suburb of Liberian capital Monrovia, the Liberia Women Democracy Radio (LWDR) 91.1 FM is the country's first radio station that seeks to highlight gender issues and pro-

vide practical training and exposure to female journalists. It is sponsored by the United Nations Democracy Fund (UNDEF) through the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) with the Liberia Women Media Action Committee (LIWOMAC) and the Young Women's Christian Association as implementing agencies. Realizing the need for women's voices to be heard in a male chauvinistic society, LIWOMAC, an organization of female journalists, which was established

in 2003, submitted a proposal to UNDEF that was later approved. The radio is therefore a project of LIWOMAC, which says the women's radio is the second in Africa and the fourth in the world.

President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf launched the station on 5 August at a ceremony attended by government officials, representatives from UN agencies, including UNIFEM Country Programme Manager, Izeduwa Derex-Briggs, and civil society organizations. The Liberian



The women's radio studio

Voice

leader encouraged girls and young women to pursue education and careers, and urged the station's management to join in the fight against illiteracy and sexual violence. Josephine Odera, UNIFEM Regional Programme Director for West Africa, expounded on the use of the media to educate, sensitize and influence opinion on gender equality and women's empowerment.

The station is still receiving reception reports and can now be heard in seven out

of Liberia's 15 counties. Station Manager Tetee Kanneh says the station is not a medium to fight back men. "We are not fighting back. We are working alongside men, but we want the views of the woman selling in the market to be heard as well."

Although much progress has been made in advancing the cause of women in the West African state with the election of President Sirleaf, and with more women now serving as ministers and legislators, Liberian women say there are a lot of issues confronting them. Rape remains systemic, and although the new rape law was passed in 2006, convictions are still low. Also, the 2007 Liberia Demographic and Health Survey for instance shows an HIV rate of 1.5 per cent among the general population aged between 15-49, but the HIV rate among women is higher (1.8 percent) than among men (1.2 percent), revealing women's higher vulnerability to HIV infection.

"The station is mainly for women. We

enjoy working with the women. Their issues have been downplayed but we have reached a point for every man to get on-board," remarks Winston Daryoue, acting news editor.

The station's staff constantly undergo series of trainings organized by renowned international media institutions as well as eminent journalists, including a female BBC journalist who is currently training staff for some months. Senior personnel also conduct in-house trainings at the station which comes on air at 6 a.m., with a break at noon and resumes from 2 p.m. to 8 p.m. Programmes are mostly interactive giving the opportunity to listeners to make contributions or ask questions. Currently, all announcements and programmes on the station are aired free of cost. "Rural women"; "Access to justice" which is for women to know the law; "Women's health"; "Women's business digest", are among the programmes. While striving for equality, women listeners are, however, reminded to

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want women to bring out their issues," says Director of News Naomi Saydee, adding that in other media outlets which are male dominated, women's issues had always taken a back seat. The station also discusses women's issues in the Liberian media. "Here the station manager is a female, the director of programmes is a female," says the female director of news, commending the UN Mission's radio as the only station in the country where women's role is very visible. "If you visit most Liberian media outlet, you may find only one woman who is probably a receptionist or a sales agent." From the studio to the Production and News rooms, women were seen working alongside their male colleagues. "You have now seen six men and still counting," notes Saydee, taking **UN Focus** on a tour of the facility during an unannounced visit. A little under half of the station's reporting staff are male. "I

want women to bring out their issues," says Director of News Naomi Saydee, adding that in other media outlets which are male dominated, women's issues had always taken a back seat. The station also discusses women's issues in the Liberian media. "Here the station manager is a female, the director of programmes is a female," says the female director of news, commending the UN Mission's radio as the only station in the country where women's role is very visible. "If you visit most Liberian media outlet, you may find only one woman who is probably a receptionist or a sales agent." From the studio to the Production and News rooms, women were seen working alongside their male colleagues. "You have now seen six men and still counting," notes Saydee, taking **UN Focus** on a tour of the facility during an unannounced visit. A little under half of the station's reporting staff are male. "I

respect their husbands. Magdalene Mathews, a Monrovia resident, describes the station as "a good initiative that will give women a stronger voice" and pay more attention to women's issues than other media houses.

Added to radio programmes, the station also organizes outreach programmes during which issues affecting women in their various communities are discussed and relevant authorities are invited to such communities. One of the challenges which the station had battled with is delayed funding. But with donor funding unlikely to continue in years to come, is the station's management making sustainability plans? "Yes, we are," admits Saydee, revealing that they are strategizing and will soon be creating an endowment fund aimed at keeping the station on air.

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Bypass Route at Payn Red Light

Paynesville Red Light, an area situated in the eastern suburbs of Monrovia, links the capital city, western Bushrod Island and Gardnersville through Somalia Drive with most of rural Liberia through Margibi and Bong counties. Since the end of the civil war, this vicinity has boomed as a hub of economic activity and now serves urban and rural businessmen and marketers thus becoming one of the most crowded locations with frequent

traffic snags that sometimes last for hours. The encroachments and street hawkers further aggravate the situation by occupying the shoulders and part of the road.

Esther Lewis who works in central Monrovia lives near the Coco-Cola Bottling Plant along the Monrovia- Kakata Highway. Though she leaves work at about 16:00 hours, she doesn't get home until nearly three hours later whereas she should have taken only about an hour to get home. "Most times we are stuck in the

Paynesville Red Light traffic for more than two hours for a distance that we should have covered in no time," she lamented.

Many more residents in the vicinity and travellers beyond Paynesville Red Light face this dilemma daily. Though the Liberia National Police and even UN Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) have tried to find a remedy to this major problem, they have not succeeded.

However, the nightmare is expected to be over soon. The Paynesville City Corporation recently approached the UN Mission to render necessary engineering assistance to develop a bypass for the area. UNMIL accepted and recently designated the 14th Pakistani Engineering battalion (PAKENG-14) to implement the exercise.



PAKENG-14 working on the bypass route at Paynesville Red Light

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Speaking to **UN FOCUS** at his base in Careysburg, Montserrado County, the Commander of PAKENG-14, Lt.-Col. Sajid Jawed said the bypass will be a 3.6 kilometre road which will run from Dupont Road, continues by Benson Hospital and terminates opposite the former Parker Paint building along the Monrovia-Kakata Highway. He named their term of reference as widening the existing track to about 30 feet, grading and levelling the entire length of the track, transporting laterite and compacting it with rollers and provide side drains where required. "Though work started on 19 July 2010 and was likely to have been completed within four or five working weeks, work have been hampered by the intermittent heavy rains," Sajid said.

Since the UN Mission deployed in Liberia in 2003, peacekeeping engineers from various contingents are a regular feature of the road network rehabilitation scenes in Liberia. Currently, the Bangladeshi, Chinese and Pakistani engineers are spread all around the country making it possible for the safe flow of vehicular traffic.

Already, the Paynesville City Corporation and the Ministry of Public Works are providing support to the bypass road project.

Morris Amara, a taxi driver plying the Paynesville-Kakata route, was so delighted at seeing work in progress at the site. "When this road is completed, I will be so happy because there will not be much delay in getting to and coming from Kakata where I run. At least I will be able to make more trips in a day than the ones I normally make which would mean more money," he pointed out with a smile.

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The PAKENG-14 based in Careysburg, Montserrado County, besides constructing the Paynesville Red Light bypass currently underway, also maintains the Monrovia-Salala route while the 14th battalion of the Bangladeshi engineers (BANENG-14) based at the Central Agricultural Research Institute (CARI) near Gbarnga, Bong County, maintains the Salala-Gbarnga, Gbarnga-Ganta, and Gbarnga-Zorzor-Voinjama-Foya routes.

The 13th Bangladeshi Engineering battalion (BANENG-13) maintains the Ganta-Tappita, Ganta-Sanniquellie-Lougatou, and the Ganta-Sanniquellie-Yekepa routes while the 13th Pakistani Engineering battalion (PAKENG-13) based in Tubmanburg, Bomi County takes care of the Tubmanburg-Monrovia and Tubmanburg-Bopolu routes.

Chinese engineering peacekeepers (CHINENG-10) based in Zwedru,

Grand Gedeh County are responsible for the maintenance and rehabilitation of the Zwedru-Pynes Town, Zwedru-Fishtown, and Zwedru-Tappita roads.

Segments of all the UNMIL engineering contingents (BANENG-13, BANENG-14, PAKENG-13, PAKENG-14) are deployed in Harper, Maryland County lending support to the rehabilitation of the Harper-Pleebo-Weebo routes in southeastern Liberia.

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'Home Calling' Co



Liberian refugees of the Buduburam Refugee Camp at the "Home Coming" concert

In late August 1990 troops of the West African sub-regional military force, ECOMOG, landed at the Freeport of Monrovia to intervene in order to stop Liberia's civil war. The first few days centred on securing a bridgehead in Monrovia. The troops also had to secure their compatriots. As the troops began evacuating their citizens and other nationals from the besieged capital, Nah Nebo and Evangeline Martin were among a good number of Liberians to have boarded the "Tarnu River", the first Ghanaian vessel taking its citizens home. When they arrived in Accra, the Ghanaian government designated a place to host Liberian refugees fleeing the country's civil war.

Nearly 20 years on, the two Liberian

refugees that were part of the maiden arrival at the Buduburam semi-urban settlement near Accra, are still there. They are among a population of over 11,000 Liberian refugees who congregated in the refugee settlement over time, making it one of the largest Liberian refugee concentrations in the sub-region.

After many years providing assistance, the UN refugee agency (UNHCR) is in the process of finding a comprehensive resolution to the Liberian refugee situation. Already, the UNHCR, Liberia Refugee, Repatriation and Resettlement Commission (LRRRC) and host countries of asylum within the sub-region have begun "informal talks" regarding the possible declaration of the Cessation Clause for the over 62,500 Liberian refugees spread around

the sub-region, especially in Ghana, Nigeria, Côte d'Ivoire, Guinea and Sierra Leone.

The LRRRC's Executive Director, Cllr. Wheatonia Barnes, confirmed that "informal discussions" began last year with relevant stakeholders on the possible declaration of the Cessation Clause during which one ceases to be a refugee. Discussions are still ongoing as certain benchmarks will have to be met before the cessation clause is invoked. "The trend is to have two successive national elections in a country, improvement in security, infrastructure and basic social services after which the situation is reviewed," she disclosed. Recently, she completed visits to the five countries hosting the Liberian refugee population warning them of the

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unfolding events and encouraged them to quickly make a decision. Liberia is scheduled to have another presidential and legislative election in October 2011.

However, indications are that a good number of Liberian refugees at Buduburam are opting to be resettled in a third western country; preferably the United States of America, Canada, Australia or a European country rather than return home.

One of their advocates and chairman of the Joint-Liberia Refugee Committees in Ghana (JOLRECG), Mawolo Jallah, has been emphatic that Liberian refugees be resettled to a third western country to enable them rebuild their human resource capacity so that when they return home they can effectively assist in Liberia's reconstruction efforts. "I'm not going to go back to Liberia with US\$50 or US\$100 and be dumped on the streets of Monrovia. I don't have a home or nothing," he said.

Due to the protracted nature of the

The G-Girls performing at the concert



refugee situation and competing global humanitarian priorities, donor funding for refugee programmes in West Africa is declining. Between 2007 and 2010, the financial allocation for the Ghana refugee programme has reduced by over 50 per cent from US\$11,122,277 in 2007 to US\$4,169,300 in 2010.

In the context of declining global funding, UNHCR-Geneva has warned that unless the Ghanaian Government and the UNHCR are able to show evidence of substantive activities towards local integration and/or voluntary repatriation, the 2010 budgetary provision would be further reduced and funds transferred to other countries. In 2008, UNHCR embarked on a mass-scale voluntary repatriation campaign that led to the repatriation of over 8,000 Liberians. However, some of them have since returned to Ghana.

From a verification exercise taking place at the camp, only 2,095 Liberian refugees have indicated their desire to integrate into Ghanaian communities. Though voluntary repatriation has long ended, nearly 700 refugees are seeking UNHCR assistance to return home.

In an effort to continue the promotion of voluntary repatriation as a durable solution for Liberian refugees in Ghana, the UNHCR-Ghana organized a public awareness concert in collaboration with the UN Mission in Liberia (UNMIL).

The concert dubbed "Home Calling" provided an opportunity for UNMIL, UNHCR-Ghana and Liberian Embassy officials in Ghana to inform the large refugee population of ongoing developments in Liberia. The UNHCR-Ghana also used the selected theme of this year's World Refugee Day, "Home: They Took My Home but they can't Take My Future" as an opportunity to, in collaboration with the Ghanaian Government, highlight the successes of some Liberian refugees who opted to remain in Ghana and build a future in their new home.

At the "Home Coming" concert, team leader Osman Benk Sankoh screened a video produced by UNMIL Video Unit on activities of the Mission and briefed the audience on developments in Liberia. Caroline Johnson, who until 2007 was like any Liberian refugee at Buduburam, shared her experiences about life while

there and since returning home. She is now the proud owner of a childhood day care centre, Precious Jewel.

UNMIL PI Community Outreach team distributed 1,000 T-shirts with the message "There is no place like home", 150 copies of the latest edition of the Mission's flagship magazine **UN FOCUS**, 80 designed mugs, 50 polo T-shirts and caps as well as designed flyers encouraging Liberians to voluntarily return or make a decision. Climaxing the musical concert, UNMIL comedian George Tamba, alias "Boutini", sent his audience into stitches, while the UNMIL band and the last two winners of the 'A Star is Born' National Talent Hunt, Nicolas Buigar and Sametta Morris and guest stars, Scientific and G-Girls, displayed their talents through their songs encouraging Liberian refugees to return home.

Quite elated, Evangeline Martin, a refugee in Ghana for nearly 20 years, said she was happy that the visiting UNMIL team had taken the fear out of some of them to return home. Martin, a 1985 graduate of the University of Liberia, who is now Women and Children Coordinator of the Buduburam Neighbourhood Watch Team, said, "As you all have spoken today, I've been relieved from some fear."

UNHCR-Ghana's Assistant Public Information Officer Ewurabena Hutchful thought the exercise went very well, noting that its success lay in UNMIL's ability to share factual, tangible and objective information with people whose eyes are constantly being veiled from the truth. "One of the challenges associated with the Liberian refugee population here is the unwillingness of the refugees to perceive information objectively and accept facts for what they are," she said.

The UNHCR-Liberia Representative Ibrahima Coly warned that sooner or later the Cessation Clause will take effect; therefore, it's about time that Liberian refugees in the sub-region make a decision about their future. "Refugee status isn't an endless situation. At some point it will stop. Liberia is moving forward. The decision is yours, but it's about time that you seriously think about it. Time is running out," he said.

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Finding New Homes

Having to flee one's home and country to seek asylum as a refugee in another strange country can be a traumatic experience for anyone. This year's World Refugee Day was celebrated under the theme: "Home: They took my Home but they can't take my Future" in recognition of the plight of more than 40 million uprooted people around the world.

Until a few years ago, the West African sub-region was the epicentre of conflict during which tens of thousands of people fled their homes and sought refuge in neighbouring countries. While West African states continue to host refugees, the UNHCR is now focusing on local integration as a durable solution to the refugee problem. Already, dozens of Liberians are finding new homes in Sierra Leone while Sierra Leoneans are doing likewise in Liberia. Many Sierra Leonean and Liberian refugees who have decided to locally integrate are doing so because they have established stronger social ties in their present communities with some refugees marrying members of their host community. Others say they fled with nothing and all their family members had been killed back home and their houses destroyed.

In marking World Refugee Day through a series of activities, the Liberia Refugee Repatriation and Resettlement Commission (LRRRC) and the UNHCR had a groundbreaking ceremony in Tienii Town, Grand Cape Mount County, for the construction of 75 housing units for former Sierra Leonean refugees. "We have been doing local integration since the end of 2008 for Sierra Leonean refugees. The total number of families that have opted for local integration is 749 comprising

more than 2,000 individuals. So far, we have provided housing for 323 families," says UNHCR Liberia Representative Ibrahim Coly. Twenty per cent of houses provided are allocated to vulnerable persons in host communities.

The objective of the local integration initiative is to assist refugees to assimilate in their various countries of asylum and become a part of the society, eventually leading to self-reliance and self-sufficiency. The process is undertaken by the host countries in collaboration with UNHCR and partners. UNHCR in Liberia pursues a two-pronged approach to local integration, including legal and social aspects. On the legal side, the refugee agency collaborates with the Liberian government to obtain long term resident permits for the former refugees while on the socio-economic aspects, UNHCR, with partners, constructs houses and improve on basic services such as schools, water and sanitation facilities, clinics, access roads, and bridges. Locally integrating former refugees are also provided with a small business start-up grant.

Local integration for Sierra Leoneans comes in the wake of the invocation of the Cessation Clause on 31 December 2008 following the end of Sierra Leone's ghastly civil war in 2000. Under the Cessation Clause, which means one ceases to be a refugee, refugees locally integrate, voluntarily repatriate, or give reasons why they would like to maintain their refugee status. Those who maintain their refugee status are assisted with education, medical and income generation activities but their status is not endless. Added to Sierra Leoneans, UNHCR also hosts Ivorian refugees, as well as other nationalities. The Deputy Internal Affairs Minister for Urban Affairs, J. Amadu Kiawu, reiterates



UNHCR

that the Liberian government is committed to ensuring that refugees in Liberia get the future they deserve, and in this regard, the Executive Director of the LRRRC, Whea-





R Representative Ibrahim Coly at the ground breaking ceremony

tonia Y. Dixon- Barnes, calls on the donor community to continue funding projects for the welfare of refugees in Liberia.

The Cessation Clause for Liberian

refugees is being discussed seven years after the establishment of a UN peacekeeping mission and the restoration of peace. Currently, more than 117,000 Liberian refugees have returned home, but UNHCR estimates that more than 64,000 Liberians remain as refugees in the region. Notwithstanding assisted voluntary repatriation officially ending in June 2007, UNHCR continues to facilitate the return of Liberian refugees by road and on the UN Mission's flights.

The ongoing construction of houses in Tienii is an addition to earlier construction, including 56 houses in Bensonville, 40 in Blamasee, and 35 in Sinje. But while the UN refugee agency had funded the construction of houses through donor support, the structures in Tienii are funded by the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) in line with the change of policy of the regional body to be more people focused than state focused.

In May, the UNHCR and the National Commission for Refugees in Nigeria conducted a campaign and profiling exercise for "no fewer than 5,263 registered Liberian refugees" in the country, according to

the UN Information Centre in Lagos. The exercise follows the successful implementation of the local integration exercise for Sierra Leonean refugees in that country. Local integration is also in progress in Côte d'Ivoire for Liberian refugees while more than 2,000 Liberian refugees have also indicated their desire to integrate in Ghana.

In August, George Okoth-Obbo, Director of the UNHCR Regional Africa Bureau in Geneva, visited Liberia during which he visited the new homes of former Sierra Leonean refugees and encouraged them to take initiatives to earn livelihoods.

Although some refugees believe their future can only be better and brighter in America, Europe, or Australia, the reality is that chances for resettlement to third countries are very remote. Coly says contingent on the availability of funds, UNHCR hopes to complete the local integration of Sierra Leonean refugees come next year while finding new homes for Liberians who do not want to return home will continue.

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New homes for former Sierra Leonean refugees



Greening the Blue

Amidst mounting global concern over climate change with resultant drought and floods wreaking havoc in many countries, the United Nations has come up with measures to counter its own greenhouse gas emissions, considered to be among the major culprits of global warming.

On World Environment Day three years ago, UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon publicly called on all UN agencies, funds and programmes to become climate neutral and “go green”. On the eve of this year’s World Environment Day in June, the UN chief launched a new website (www.greeningtheblue.org), which provides information about the UN’s progress in improving its internal environmental sustainability performance.

“Greening the blue is a kind of metaphor which means greening the UN,” explains UNMIL Environment Chief Charles Rwandekeye, adding: “As far as carbon emissions are concerned, DPKO missions behave like industrialized countries. This means our emissions are very high. Greening the blue is therefore about the UN reducing its carbon footprint.”

Among other things, the greening the blue website highlights the greenhouse gas inventories of most UN organizations including UN peacekeeping missions; case studies from different UN organizations on what they’re doing to “go green”; detailed tips and tools for staff in reducing their personal carbon footprints; toolkits for professional staff to help them embed sustainability into their workplace; and a standardized, web-based system that can be used by the whole UN family to calculate and take stock of greenhouse gas

emissions.

Scientists say human activities result in emissions of four principal greenhouse gases: carbon dioxide (CO₂), methane (CH₄), nitrous oxide (N₂O) and the halocarbons (a group of gases containing fluorine, chlorine and bromine). Experts say the proportion of these gases, which have global warming potential, has increased significantly.

In 2009, the first coordinated approach to a UN-wide greenhouse gas emission inventory with a common methodology was implemented. The inventories allow institutions to identify the main sources of emission and to take action to reduce them whilst achieving efficiency gains. Data for emissions is collected through air and road travels, generators and the fuel they consume; how many offices and equipment are used and so on. The calculations then identify UN organizations, including UN peacekeeping missions that produce the most greenhouse gases as well those UN organizations that are greening the blue.

UNMIL joined the efforts to mitigate the impact of climate change with Special Representative Ellen Margrethe Løj launching a tree planting campaign last year as part of the Billion Tree Campaign by the UN Environment Programme (UNEP). Although Liberia’s landscape is dotted with rich forests, environmental experts say trees are being increasingly cut down for charcoal, timber and other purposes without proper replacement. Trees use up man-made carbon dioxide. “We need more trees all over the globe including Liberia if we are going to fight climate change,” said Løj, pointing out that the effect of climate change is already felt in Liberia, evident by changing weather pat-



Ellen Margrethe Løj plants a tree



terns. Rwandekeye says the tree planting campaign was “very successful” as it was embraced by the Mission’s leadership, including Deputy Force Commander Maj.-Gen. Carl Modey and others. UNMIL staff continue to plant trees.

In addition to planting trees, what else is UNMIL doing to green the blue? “We are conducting training awareness for staff for both the contingents and civilian staff,” says Rwandekeye, pointing out that training helps staff to better understand the importance of environmental issues. In February this year, UNMIL was among participants at a training programme in Geneva which brought together environmental focal points and experts. Going green also includes the Mission procuring products and equipment that are environment friendly. “Before contracting any services, Procurement Unit consults the Environment Unit for input regarding environmental issues that should be included in the advertisement. And before the contract is issued, environmental sustainability is taken into consideration. We are

now talking about Green Procurement in UNMIL. Environment friendly equipment shouldn’t use a lot of energy and have energy conservation symbol on them,” reiterates Rwandekeye.

UNMIL is also effectively managing the various wastes the Mission produces. Staff are periodically reminded of tips to conserve energy -- use natural light where possible; turn lights and equipment off when not in use; use air conditioning sparingly; and power down the copier when not in use.

As greening the blue efforts continue in UNMIL, staff are encouraged to visit www.greeningtheblue.org to learn more on what they can do as individuals to support the UN’s effort of greening its offices as well as use the same measures at home.

Meanwhile, Rwandekeye left UNMIL in late August for reassignment with the UN Mission in Sudan (UNMIS) as environmental engineer.

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Maj.-Gen. Carl Modey joins the campaign

Liberian

How crucial is a PEACEFUL 2011 election



Darius Dillon – Former Senatorial Candidate, Montserrado County: Without sustainable peace you cannot enhance sustainable democracy. So I hold the strong view that a peaceful 2011 election will ensure the sustainability of the relative peace that we enjoy here today. Anytime people express themselves by the ballot box, it reduces tension especially if those results are credible and peaceful.



Cllr. Jerome J. Verdier – Liberian lawyer: The forthcoming elections are very crucial for this country because it represents a genuine transition from conflict to peace in Liberia. These elections are going to prove, if they are successful, that we have truly transitioned from conflict to peace. Secondly, it will be the first time Liberia would have had successive democratic elections, that is the 2005 elections followed by another election in 2011 after a complete presidential term which had not happened in our recent history. In 1971, President Tubman died in office. In 1975 President Tolbert was the only presidential candidate and we had a coup in 1980. He was killed. There was war in the 1990s and President Doe was killed. Taylor was elected in 1997 but he did not end the term. The 2011 elections will be the first time Liberia will conduct successive democratic elections. If that happens, it sends out a clear message to Liberians and our partners that indeed we are on our path towards genuine peace and that indeed we have a way of choosing leaders. As such, Liberians would get accustomed to knowing that this is the way to make democratic decisions and will send a practical message to all Liberians that this is how we should go.



Rufus Neufville – Representative, District # 2, Montserrado County: It is first important to state that election is the fulcrum of our own democracy; it is the time that the people stand up, not by representation, but by themselves to determine the policy and the direction the country should be taking. I feel it's very crucial because we are all aware that Liberia is graduating from its status as a failed state and we do know that the 2011 election will determine how we go further. This is a young democracy and our people paid so dearly for it. I believe if we have a peaceful 2011 election, Liberia could be peaceful in a very long run. We must all begin to understand that in politics, we have opponents and not enemies. The more we understand that politics is a game where friends may have different opinions, the more peaceful it will be.



Dave Koomey – Chairman of the Montserrado County Legislative Caucus: I think there is a need that we put a little more focus on the security sector because they could just play a pivotal role as regards security during these elections. If you have security sector not doing the right thing, I think it will hinder our process. So I think there is a need to improve the ideology of the police to be safer and more humane in their action and stop taking such actions that could irritate and stir up the population to rise against them. I would also request the National Elections Commission to exhibit a free, fair and transparent election.

s Speak

for progress and democracy in Liberia?



David Korte – **Former member of the Interim Legislative Assembly:** These elections are very crucial but I think we are on course. We have fought so hard for this peace that we have today and there's no way we will turn back. There is a need that all Liberians try to uphold the peace. We all have to love and respect each other, be nationalistic by putting Liberia first. As long as Liberia is put first, there will be a continuation of the peace that we have now.



Augustus Jones – **Chairman, Constitutional Reform in Liberia:** It's an election that should mark the continuity of democracy. Since the second republic, we have not had any regime ending its tenure. If it comes to a point where an election is held it's an indication that the first regime of post-conflict republic ended successfully and we are entering into the tenure of a second regime which is very crucial. Now, I think this government should take on the responsibility in ensuring that it happens. I would think the government should be very cognizant of how they behave especially as it relates to the 1986 Constitution. Once they are seen abrogating the Constitution, it would pose danger for us as was seen in the case of Article 80 d and setting the threshold. I would hope that the Constitution is respected.



Victoria Nyantee – **Employee, Capitol Building:** As a Liberian we must put our country first and avoid ethnicity and tribalism. We should elect those who mean well for the country and who can reconcile the people. It's important that people go beyond regional and tribal sentiments and elect people based on the content of their character. We should vote wisely and elect those that mean well for this country.



Marayah Fyweah – **National Chairlady, Coalition of Political Parties Women in Liberia:** I see the elections of 2011 as crucial. However, there are a lot of challenges that Liberians will have to overcome. The challenges include ethnicity, discrimination and voters' apathy. We, as Liberians, can overcome these challenges once we come together and reconcile. I think we can go beyond bounds to see how we can unite, but we have to do that with trust. So in short, we have to maintain national identity beyond ethnicity and reconcile.



David Aquoi – **Finance Clerk – UN Mission in Liberia (UNMIL):** We need to have the kind of elections that will continue to consolidate the democracy we already have in Liberia. Though it's in its infant stage, we need to make sure we consolidate the peace that we have. For me I still consider the peace process fragile, so come 2011 the elections should be conducted in such a way that we continue to maintain peace.

