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President Sirleaf Dedicates First of Five Regional Justice and Security Hubs in Gbarnga

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(MONROVIA, LIBERIA – Tuesday, February 12, 2013) The Government of Liberia and the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) have launched the first of five Regional Justice and Security Hubs in Gbarnga, Bong County, intended to increase citizens' access to justice and security services in communities in Bong, Lofa and Nimba Counties.

With US\$13.3 million provided through the UN Peace-building Support Office for the construction of the five Hubs, the Government plans to open four additional Hubs to be positioned strategically throughout the country. The

construction of Hubs 2 and 3 in Zwedru (to support Grand

Gedeh and Sinoe Counties), and Harper (to serve Maryland, Grand Kru and River Gee Counties), will

commence this year. Hubs 4 and 5 will be built in Tubmanburg (to serve Bomi, Grand Cape Mount and Gbarpolu Counties), and Buchanan (to serve Grand Bassa, Margibi and River Cess Counties).

According to an Executive Mansion release, President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, speaking at the well-attended program, emphasized that Government is doing more than simply erecting and dedicating structures. The Hub program is consistent with its new Agenda for Transformation and efforts to improve and reform the Justice and Security Sector, while ensuring that Government is prepared to sustain the peace in light of the UNMIL drawdown and transition.

The Liberian leader said the Justice and Security Regional Hub concept derives from the Government's initiative to decentralize these services through a regional and county-level approach and the Hub program is proof that decentralization of the Justice and Security Sector is well under way, and that the security of the nation will be sustained, as more and more hubs are constructed and become operational.

"The opening of this first Hub, in the nation's heartland, is confirmation that we are committed about decentralization, we are committed to serving all over the country, ensuring all our citizens that Monrovia is not Liberia!" President Sirleaf stressed, adding that the decentralization of Government's services to the people is another indicator of good governance. "Citizens' access to justice and security lies at the heart of the rule of law, and is essential to political stability. Decentralization of public services is a key to extending state authority and ensuring that citizens have a stake in the governance of their country," the Liberian leader reiterated.

President Sirleaf noted that, as part of the Liberia Peace-building Program – the rule of law, security sector reform and reconciliation – one cannot exist without the other. She said in order for the country to reconcile its differences, the people must first feel safe, and feel that they can rely on the security sector in time of crisis. Each Hub, she said, is designed to increase citizens' access to justice and security by co-locating police, courts, and immigration services, adding that the Hubs will also enhance Government's efforts to extend services from the Capital to outlying and previously underserved areas.

President Sirleaf said that, as in other post-conflict countries, Liberia's institutions are still fragile and if peace is



to endure, international support must be directed not only to traditional development sectors but also to ensuring access to justice and security service, thereby strengthening the rule of law and promoting national reconciliation. For her part, the United Nations Assistant Secretary-General for Peace-building Support, Judy Cheng-Hopkins, said the dedication of the Hub symbolizes and encapsulate what the peace-building architecture had envisaged in 2005, which was a convergence of innovative concepts. "It is precisely when a Government has a bold groundbreaking, peace-building vision that the three pillars of the peace-building architecture work best," she said, adding that through the Hub, Government is trying to reverse decades of neglect to the remote regions of the country and extend its presence and authority throughout the nation.

Mrs. Cheng-Hopkins reiterated that citizens have to see and feel the existence of their Government and to receive tangible services from it, noting that it's a key dimension not only of peace-building but also of nation-building. She said the UN Peace-building Support Office and the UN Peace-building Fund are proud to be associated with this important endeavor, noting that the Fund has provided US\$5.3 million to undertake the first Hub. Another US\$8 million has been allocated for the construction of additional hubs, she said, observing that this it is most ambitious project undertaken by the Fund so far.. The Special Representative of the Secretary-General (SRSG), Karin Landgren, said that with the dedication of the Hub, "We are here looking at the future of Liberia – a future where justice and security are brought closer to every Liberian, where greater fairness and accountability increase everyone's confidence in the rule of law." She added, "It is a future of greater security, which also contributes to the Government and UNMIL's overall security transition strategy."

The Acting Chief Justice of the Supreme Court, His Honor Francis Korkpor, Sr., said that strengthening the rule of law and promoting Security Sector reform need to be simultaneously addressed to achieve better results. He said the priority of the Judiciary is to deliver justice, while that of the Ministry of Justice is to ensure citizens' security. "Without citizens' security, there can be no guarantee of an enduring peace, social and economic development," he said.

The Acting Chief Justice said that although the Hub was originally designed for the Security Sector, the inclusion of the Judiciary creates opportunities for a greater impact for the benefit of Liberians and foreigners within our borders. He said that with the opening of the Hub, the Judiciary celebrates a huge presence in central Liberia, unprecedented in the history of the country. "Indeed, this art of our transformation," he said, extending gratitude to the international partners.

The Minister of Justice, Cllr. Christiana Tah, used her remarks to provide an overview of the Hub concept. The Gbarnga Hub will be staffed by 139 personnel, including police officers, human rights monitors, public defenders, prosecutors, and probation and immigration officers. The Hub concept shows Liberia's commitment to the Justice and Security Sectors working together, including law enforcement, the courts, state prosecution and defense, and corrections.

Some Hub services are already operational, including specialized services from the Sexual and Gender-Based Violence Crimes Unit. Liberia National Police Officers from the Police Support Unit (PSU) have also begun patrols to help build confidence and trust amongst local communities. Community advisory services and dispute resolution services will be developed at the Hub over the coming months.

The ceremony was also attended by incoming the Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Rule of Law, Tamrat Samuel; a delegation from the UN Peace-building Commission, headed by its Liberia Country Configuration Chair, Ambassador Staffan Tillaner, and its Sierra Leone Country Configuration Chair, Ambassador Guillermo Rishchynski; Internal Affairs Minister Blamoh Nelson; as well as the Superintendents of Bong, Nimba and Lofa Counties, civil society leaders, and representatives of local communities who will be served by the Gbarnga Justice and Security Hub. Below are some photographs of the dedication.



[GbarngaSecurityPost](#) [1]

To read remarks as delivered by The president click here =====> [2]

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