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# Inaugural Session of U.S.-Liberia Partnership Dialogue Held in United States

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Washington, D.C. – May 8, 2013: The inaugural session of the U.S.-Liberia Partnership Dialogue was held in Washington, D.C. on May 7, 2013, with the signing of a joint statement, following a day-long deliberation involving senior government officials of both countries.

Held at the United States Institute of Peace (USIP), Liberia and the United States reached another historical milestone in the relationship between both countries with the signing of a joint statement at the end of the U.S.-Liberia Partnership Dialogue. The Foreign Minister of the Republic of Liberia, His Excellency Augustine Kpehe Ngafuan, signed on behalf of Liberia, while Ambassador Wendy R. Sherman, U.S. Department of State Under Secretary for Political Affairs, signed on behalf of the Government of the United States.



The joint statement affirms the commitment of the U.S. and Liberia to work together to address the challenges Liberia currently faces in its agriculture and energy sectors, and acknowledges their importance to Liberia's overall economic development.

The inaugural session of the U.S.-Liberia Partnership Dialogue focused on two of the three working groups for the Partnership Dialogue, which are Agriculture and Food Security, and Energy and Power Infrastructure. In the area of Agriculture and Food Security, participants at the Partnership Dialogue discussed policy and institutional constraints to private sector-led development of Liberia's agriculture sector, and ways to address these constraints.

The two sides committed to explore opportunities to expand bilateral cooperation to increase food security and

nutrition, especially under the “Feed the Future Initiative,” a U.S. Government program.

Regarding the Energy and Power Infrastructure, the Partnership Dialogue also reviewed Liberia’s efforts to meet its growing power generation, transmission and distribution requirements.

Both countries underscored the need to continue to collaborate on how to encourage private sector investment in Liberia’s energy sector by improving regulatory policies and to accelerate the development of a well-governed and inclusive Liberian energy sector.

Speaking at the historic occasion, Foreign Minister Ngafuan, on behalf of the President, Government and people of Liberia, thanked the United States for its support of Liberia since the founding of the country nearly two



“The United States has been a strong

and reliable partner of Liberia since the founding of Liberia nearly two centuries ago and has assisted immensely in Liberia’s transition from war to peace and economic recovery,” Minister Ngafuan said. “We note with appreciation an endless list of positive U.S. assistance to Liberia including but not limited to the rebuilding of the Liberian army and coast guard, U.S. support to the cancellation of Liberia’s huge debt overhang, the consolidation of the culture of democracy, the restoration of social services, the building of infrastructure, the rebuilding of public sector capacity, the improvement of public financial management, and a host of significant interventions through the Millennium Challenge Corporation’s Threshold Program and the soon to be rolled out Compact Program.”

Minister Ngafuan gave an overview of the progress that has been made in post-war Liberia, especially since the government of President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf came to power. He spoke of improvement in social services and freedom of speech and of the press, reforms in public financial management and governance, as well as good working relationship with neighboring countries to maintain peace and stability within Liberia and the sub-region. Minister Ngafuan noted that the Liberian government and people have crafted a long-term development vision to catapult Liberia to a middle income country by 2030.

Also in remarks on behalf of the United States Government, Ambassador Sherman said the high-level participation from both governments demonstrates the significance of the U.S.-Liberia Partnership Dialogue to the bilateral relationship between both countries, and the importance of the sectors that were focused on during the inaugural session.

Under Secretary Sherman indicated that the Partnership Dialogue reaffirms the United State’s strong commitment to continue to support the government and people of Liberia as they rebuild their country after years of civil war.

“The establishment of this dialogue and of the sustained high-level contact that the U.S. and Liberia have maintained in recent years demonstrates our great friendship and bilateral relationship, which has only become stronger over the years,” said Ambassador Sherman.

The Partnership Dialogue was climaxed with a public outreach event, which was attended by community and opinion leaders of the Liberian Diaspora, representatives of the private sector, NGOs, among others.



Members of the audience were afforded the opportunity to ask the panelists questions regarding the state of affairs in Liberia, as well as U.S.-Liberia relationship.

Speaking as a panelist during the public outreach event, the Minister of Finance, Hon. Amara Konneh, emphasized that Liberians in the Diaspora could continue to play more meaningful role in the rebuilding of their native country.

Minister Konneh expressed the need for the regularization of Liberian laws that would allow for dual citizenship. He noted that Liberians in the Diaspora constitute a very critical part of the country's human resources, and therefore, it was very important for Liberia to benefit from their contributions.

Other officials of the Liberian Government who participated in the high-level Partnership Dialogue as panelists were Agriculture Minister Florence Chenoweth; Lands, Mines and Energy Minister Patrick Sendolo; and the Executive Director of the National Investment Commission, Hon. Ciata Bishop.

Members of the Liberian delegation included Commerce and Industry Minister Axel Addy; Liberia's Ambassador to the United States, His Excellency Jeremiah C. Sulunteh; Grand Cape Mount County Senator Edward Dagoseh; Cllr. Seward M. Cooper, Legal Advisor to the President; D. Maxwell Kemeyan, President of the Liberian Business Association (LIBA); Chief James Sayee of River Gee County; and Hon. Christopher Neyor, President & CEO, Morweh Energy Group, who is also a member of the Liberian Chamber of Commerce.

On January 15, 2013, President Sirleaf and former U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton signed a Statement of Intent launching a Partnership Dialogue that institutionalizes the long-standing bilateral relationship between Liberia and the United States.

The Partnership Dialogue agreement establishes Working Groups in three key areas, which are the following: (a) Agriculture and Food Security; (b) Energy and Power Infrastructure; and (c) Human Development.

The next session of the Partnership Dialogue will be held in Monrovia, during which there will be a focus on the Human Development Working Group. [Click here to view more pictures from this event](#) [1]

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