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On September 20, 2013, Liberia's Foreign Minister, Augustine K. Ngafuan, addressed the 39th General Assembly of the Union of Liberian Associations in the Americas (ULAA) in Columbus, OH. Minister Ngafuan was joined in Ohio by a three-man delegation from the Embassy of Liberia in the United States. They were Deputy Chief of Mission Jeff Dowana, First Secretary for Political Affairs Christopher Nippy, and First Secretary for Financial Affairs, Doliakeh Quويمie. During the convention, ULAA had a number of concerns that were expressed regarding its relationship with the Government of Liberia. Among others, the convention noted the need for the issue of Dual Citizenship to be put on the front burner, and that the government seriously considers the putting into the place the mechanism that would enable Liberians in the Diaspora to vote during elections in Liberia. The Minister's remarks follows:

"Mr. Wilmot Kunney, Chairman of the National Board of Directors, Union of Liberian Associations in the Americas (ULAA); Mr. Gaye D. Sleah, Jr., President of ULAA and other Members of the Executive Leadership of ULAA; Dr. Leroy Boikai, Chairman of the 39th General Assembly Planning Committee; Heads and Members of Liberian Associations in the Americas; Fellow Compatriots, Friends of Liberia:

When the Liberian Institute for Statistics and Geo-Information Services (LISGIS) released the results of Liberia's housing and population census conducted in 2008, it estimated the population of Liberia at 3.4 million with a projected annual growth rate of 2.1%. Therefore it is safe to assume that the Liberian population in 2013 is approximately 3.88 million. As useful as these figures are for planning and other purposes, they have a very serious limitation – they don't account for Liberians in the Diaspora, Liberians in the Americas included.

Although accurate statistics are hard to come by in terms of the number of Liberians in the Diaspora, we may be safe to say that the number is in the hundreds of thousands. Liberians are dispersed in vast numbers all across the globe – in Africa, Asia, Europe, the Americas and elsewhere.

Liberians in the Diaspora often group themselves in associations or organizations as a means of seeking their common interest and impacting on the socio-economic and political life of our common patrimony, Liberia as well as on the life of their host nations. Among the many Liberian organizations across the world, it is an incontrovertible fact that none of them has had a more profound impact on the life of Liberia than the Union of Liberian Organizations in the Americas (ULAA). Founded in 1974 during a period of great political ferment in Liberia, ULAA has never relinquished its position as the premier Liberian organization in the Diaspora.

Therefore, Mr. President and Officers of ULAA, fellow compatriots, friends of Liberia, I consider it an honor of no



Minister Augustine K. Ngafuan

mean magnitude to have been selected as the Keynote Speaker at the 39th Assembly of this premier body of Liberians away from home. I also extend tons of thanks to all of you for the warm Liberian welcome and hospitality you have accorded me and my delegation since our arrival in Columbus, Ohio. I am happy to be in the Ohio, the "Buckeye State" because of its longstanding links with Liberia. History tells us that Edward J. Roye, the 5th President of Liberia and first Standard Bearer of the True Whig Party, a Party that ruled Liberia for over a century, was an African American born in Newark, Ohio. In fact, the capital city of Liberia, Monrovia and the city of Dayton in Ohio have enjoyed sister-city relationship since 1972. I am particularly grateful to be here at this august Assembly also because it has given me the opportunity to meet and interact with many good friends some of whom I have not seen for over a decade.

Mr. President, fellow Liberians, A little over a month ago, we observed in Monrovia the tenth anniversary of uninterrupted peace in Liberia. And as many of you may be aware, it was on August 18, 2003 that Liberian military and political leaders signed the Accra Comprehensive Peace Accord (CPA) after spending three painstaking and sometimes very frustrating months in Accra, Ghana. The signing of the Accord brought an end to nearly fourteen years of brutal, episodic civil war that witnessed some of the most abominable demonstrations of man's inhumanity to man. The CPA provided for the cessation of hostilities, the formation of a Transitional Government of National Unity, and the holding of free, fair, and transparent democratic elections in two years. Unlike previous peace accords that inspired great hope and elation in Liberians only to be broken later by one faction or all the factions, the Accra Peace Accord was respected by all the parties, as all the critical milestones set out in the Accord were met mostly on schedule. Since 2003, we have had two successive democratic presidential and general elections and have taken giant strides on the path of rebuilding the Liberian State. The celebration of ten consecutive years of peace conjured mixed and contradictory reactions from the Liberian public. As usual, anti-government critics were to lash out that it was pointless to talk about celebrating ten years of peace when, according to them, the "very vices that occasioned the war are still rearing their ugly heads in today's Liberia". For them, not much has been achieved since the end of the war as many people are "still poor" and, to put it as crudely as the critics sometimes put it, "nothing is happening". However, there are many other Liberians, including myself, who do not see the bottle as half empty, but instead see it as half full. While not dismissing the concerns of those of our compatriots who are not too upbeat about present-day realities in Liberia, we feel that no matter the challenges of our recent past and of today, there is still cause for celebration; if not for anything, but for the mere fact that Liberians are today not disagreeing on the battlefield but are instead waging war with their pens, keyboards, cell-phones microphones, and in the ballot boxes". Download a copy or read the entire speech by clicking [NEXT=====>](#) [1]

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