

Statement

By

**Honorable Morris M. Dukuly, Sr.
Minister of Internal Affairs, R.L.**

at

**Programs Marking the Launching of the Second Case
Progression Study on Paramount Chiefs and Tribal
Governors' Court Structure in Liberia.**

**Ministry of Internal Affairs
Monrovia, Liberia
Friday, August 2, 2013**

Our Colleagues and Friends of UNMIL;
My Colleagues of the Ministerial Staff of this Ministry;
The Chair and Members of the Advisory Council to the Minister of
Internal Affairs;
Governors and Traditional Leaders here present;
Members of Civil Society Organizations;
Ladies and Gentlemen:

Permit me to firstly welcome you to this Ministry and to this special
Launching of the Second Case Progression Study on Paramount Chiefs
and Tribal Governors' Court Structure in Liberia.

Secondly, I would like to express on behalf of the President of Liberia,
Her Excellency Madame Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, the Government and
people of Liberia, as well as on behalf of our Ministry, our thanks and
appreciation to the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL), our
Colleagues and Friends, Dr. Francis Kaikai and Mr. Adraino Cassandra –
and the Head of the Legal and Judicial System Support Department, Mr.
Kamudoni Nyasulu, as well as the entire UNMIL Family, for sponsoring
and supporting this very important study.

I would also like to thank the consultant, a fellow Liberian, Mr. Saah
N'Tow, for the objectivity and meticulousness which he brought to bear
on his work and the outstanding findings of the study on the tribal court
structure, processes procedures, which we endorse and launch here this
morning.

I would like to refer all of us to the engagement of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, particularly in support of paragraph three of the Providence Island Resolution No. 165, of 2013, which brought together Chiefs, Elders, Governors, and other Members of the National Council of Chiefs and Elders to discuss rule of law issues and by which they welcomed the decision of the Government of Liberia to include them in the administration of the Government of this Republic consistent with the requirements of our Constitution – and under the Rule of Law for the maintenance of security, public safety, and justice. The Chiefs committed themselves then to work with the Ministries of Justice and Internal Affairs, as well as other agencies of Government to explore best options to integrate and harmonize traditional and statutory means of dispensing justice and upholding the rule of law in Liberia. I commend the wisdom of Resolution.

The Resolution **was** and remains an important declaration – and today, as the new Minister of Internal Affairs, I applaud our Chiefs for their wisdoms and recognition of the need for overall reform of our traditional practices.

Let me state here categorically that tribal governors' courts are an important, and indeed an integral part of our system of dispensing I have traveled throughout this country – and have seen governors' courts in operations. I can therefore affirm that they fill an important void – and need our support and assistance to improve the administration of this system of justice, because they adjudicate issues that keep the peace in matters small but potentially explosive as such as family disputes, debt matters, land and property disputes, marital quarrels, among others.

In spite of the role that governors' courts play, I should like to emphasize the need and urgency for judicial education to enhance and create a balance between modern and traditional practices of dispensing justice in order to minimize or prevent conflicts with modern standards of human rights – and best practices under domestic and international laws that our Government adheres to.

It is therefore my hope that the lessons that have been learned and that will be communicated from the study, as well as the recommendations will serve to guide and enhance best practices to align traditional value and culture and norms by enhancing community cohesion and unity.

As we recognize local justice actors, it is my personal hope and expectation that governors' court will understand our need and instance on transparency, fairness, and accountability in the administration of justice at all levels of our country.

It is our further hope and appeal that the police institutions will endeavor to understand and extend support to governors' – and magisterial court systems because they are an important link in our judicial chain.

It is in this light that the Ministry of Internal Affairs will begin a more robust advocacy for training and support to our governors and other tribal courts so that tribal governors remain committed to customary practices to correspond with current national reform efforts in the rule of law sector of Liberia.

Again, permit me to thank the UNMIL Family – and the Special Representative of the Secretary General of the United Nations Mission in Liberia, Madame Karin Landreg.

With that, it is now my great privilege and pleasure to declare this report officially launched.

Thank you!