

*Vision 2030: National Conference
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Roadmap for National Healing, Peace-building and Reconciliation

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Liberia is 166 years old; the oldest republic in Africa. We have conducted more presidential and legislative elections than any other country on the continent. We are older than all the international bodies – we helped to form the United Nations; we are signatory to the WHO charter; we helped to create ECOWAS and so on.

In fact the Organization of African Unity which is now called the African Union (AU) was created in Sanniquellie less than two hours' drive from this city, Gbarnga, but the head office of the AU, which is the largest office building in Africa, is built in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.

Economically, Liberia has one of the largest tropical rain forest areas in Africa; we have gold, diamond, iron ore, and now have just discovered that Liberia has oil too. We have a sea coastline of more than 350 miles; our country is blessed with plenty of rainfall and sunshine good for the production of food all year round. Yet Liberia is one of the most backward and poorest counties in the world. Surely, something is wrong!

The question as to what is really wrong with Liberia came up in the hallways during the Liberian peace talks in Accra, Ghana, in 2003. In the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) which ended the Liberian civil war, we agreed that a Truth and Reconciliation process should be undertaken to establish the root cause of whatever is wrong with the country. We agreed that this would be done through public dialogue. The aim was to promote peace and reconciliation. During a period of three year, the TRC conducted more than 800 public hearings and took more than 20,000 statements from Liberians at home and abroad.

In June 2009, the TRC produced a report which contains our conclusion as to what is really wrong with the country. The problem is political: it is coming from a governance policy of exclusion and marginalization in decision-making for running the state. The report further clarifies that the policy of exclusion and marginalization went beyond the holding of public office, it extended to the deliberate removal of symbols, cultures, and languages of the diverse ethnic groups from the identity of the state.

Now that we know the root cause of our problem, we are proceeding to solve it:

We are conducting free, fair and transparent democratic elections by which the people are directly electing who should be President and who should be Representative or Senator. We are conducting all kinds of open workshops and town hall meetings to consult on the common good in a peaceful and orderly manner. Everybody is free to talk. We have agreed to implement a

National Policy on Decentralization and Local Governance. We have initiated a number of laws and policies intended to place decision-making in the hands of the people.

Some agencies of government have begun to de-concentrate their administrative functions as the first phase of decentralization. A new local government act is being finalized which will not only recognize and restore the authority and dignity of traditional chiefs and elders (Paramount, Clan and General Town Chiefs), but will also bring about the election of County Superintendents, Administrative District Commissioners, and City Mayors.

We are analyzing the Constitution to determine what level of adjustment is needed to ensure inclusion. The national budget is becoming constituency-sensitive by the allocation of large amounts of money subject to the decisions of county councils. We have decided to establish a National Identification Registry (NIR) through which every Liberian citizen will be assigned a unique personal identification number that can be used anywhere in the world to confirm his or her citizenship which will ensure direct access to services.

Government's operation is becoming increasingly more open and accountable through vigorous compliance with a number of sunshine laws. These include: the Public Financial Management Act; the General Auditing Commission Act; the Liberia Anticorruption Commission Act; the Freedom of Information Act; the Community Forest Right Act; the Public Procurement and Concession Commission Act; the National Independent Human Rights Commission Act; the Governance Commission Act; the Law Reform Act; the Constitution Review Committee; and more.

Through the TRC process, we agreed that, whatever we do should move Liberia towards lasting peace and reconciliation.

Now, with the mandate of the President; based on the result of extensive consultation with national stakeholders, and with the help of our international development partners, and with the endorsement of the Cabinet, we present to the Liberian people through the delegates attending this National Conference on the Vision, the Strategic Roadmap for National Healing, Peace-building, and Reconciliation. The Roadmap should be one of the critical instruments to guide our movement into the year 2030.

Some may be wondering why linkage of the roadmap to Vision-2030. We are doing so because. National Healing, Peace-building and Reconciliation are not quick-impact projects – we need time to achieve results.

The Roadmap for National Healing, Peace-building, and Reconciliation recaps the history of Peace-building in Liberia. It reflects on the root causes of our national conflict and how we got to be where we are today. It outlines a national attitude on peace and reconciliation and articulates a mission. It describes our opportunities and challenges in sustaining the peace. It

provides a clear working definition for Peace-building and reconciliation in the Liberian context and the framework for implementation of initiatives focusing on timelines for outcomes and outputs.

The Roadmap argues that ongoing state transformation initiatives including the provision of basic social services, decentralization of governance, constitutional, security sector, and justice and rule of law reforms, as well as the modernization of the legislature, will provide enabling condition for the attainment and sustainability of peace and reconciliation in Liberia.

The roadmap defines a framework for dealing with the issue of justice and impunity. The Roadmap contains a strong emphasis on the issue of national identity. Peace-building, healing and reconciliation activities are categorized in 13 thematic areas. There are sections dedicated to oversight and management structure, as well as to monitoring and evaluation; and operational risk and mitigating strategies.

The Peace-building, national healing, and reconciliation program will be implemented on three tracks: First, for building and sustaining the peace, there will be activities and projects to refine the laws, rules, regulations, guidelines and policies governing public interaction and access to services. There will also be activities and projects to strengthen the capacity of all agencies of government and other actors to deliver on their public mandates aimed at making people happy. Second, for healing the nation, we will have to focus on activities that promote and facilitate transformation of hate into love and compassion. We will need to create opportunities for atonement, reflection, celebration and appreciation of history, culture, customs and tradition and human talent. We will need to create space for greater public interaction – parks, theaters, museums, town halls, arenas, monuments, promotion of arts and culture, expression of faith, etc. Third, for reconciliation, we will have to create and support the enabling condition and environment for justice, punishment and mercy.

Some may wonder why we are linking the Peace-building roadmap and the Agenda for Transformation to Vision-2030. We do so because it is difficult to implement the governance decentralization policy and to transform Liberia into a middle-income society without peace, national healing and reconciliation. These are not quick-impact activities. They take time to implement.

The Administration takes due note that the general goal, among other dreams of the Liberian people, is that by the year 2030:

- the government of Liberia should be fully decentralized;
- the peace of the country should be well grounded; the nation healed; and the people reconciled;

- by 2030, the country should be a middle-income society and there should be banking services in all major localities;
- the local government administrative structure should have been streamlined and rationalized;
- every Liberian citizen should have a personal identification number by which he or she can be accounted for and included; with access to services;
- by 2030, the local government administration of Liberia should will be effective at the general town level;
- by 2030, every Liberian citizen and non-citizen residing in Liberia should have access to basic education and human capacity-building opportunities;
- every citizen and non-citizen residing in Liberia should have access to safe-drinking water and primary healthcare;
- by 2030, there should be access-roads to all major towns of the country;
- every local government administrative area should have adequate administrative buildings and facilities, including electricity and internet technology;
- by 2030, all locality boundaries within the local government administrative structure should be harmonized;
- by 2030, in addition to the election of Paramount, Clan, and Town Chiefs as is now provided for in the Constitution, all County Superintendents Administrative District Commissioners and City Mayors should be elected;
- by 2030, all babies should be born in established medical facilities;
- farmers in Liberia should be engaged in stationary farming and not slash-and-burn or subsistence farming;
- all agencies of government should be fully capacitated both in logistics and human resource, to deliver as their respective mandates require;
- citizens and non-citizens residing in Liberia should have full access to justice at all community levels;

- there should be recognition and harmony of Liberian tradition and culture with modern realities;
- a new local government act should have been passed into law and fully implemented;
- all major towns and urban localities in Liberia should have electricity and internet connection;
- by 2030, the women of Liberia will have no need to struggle for space in the governance of the country at all levels – the ground should be level;
- there should be a multiplicity of town halls, public parks, museums, recreational facilities, organized commentaries etc. in each locality;
- there should be well established and modernized cultural centers and traditional schools to teach not only culture and customs, but standard education as well;

With all these facilities and opportunities in place by 2030, we, Liberians, should all live happily with each other in this Glorious Land of Liberty.

Please accept the Government's Roadmap for National Healing, Peacebuilding, and Reconciliation.